

Writing the History of Development (Part 1: The First Wave)

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Today . . . the idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions which catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated. But above all, the hopes and desires which made the idea fly, are now exhausted: development has grown obsolete . . . It is time to dismantle this mental structure . . . [and] bid farewell to the defunct idea in order to clear our minds for fresh discoveries.

—Wolfgang Sachs¹

It has been over twenty years since Wolfgang Sachs boldly proclaimed the “end of development” in his postdevelopment studies collection, *The Development Dictionary*. Sachs and his fellow contributors were not alone in their desire to relegate the idea to the dustbin of history. Indeed, since the late 1980s, the concept of development as applied to the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America has come under intense fire, not only from academics but also from within mainstream policy circles. For a time, under the onslaught of such scrutiny, it looked as if the critics might be right, and that we might be witnessing development’s last rites and requiem. Yet today, more than two decades later, the central tenets of the development discourse continue to persist and permeate the minds of policy makers and analysts, seemingly impervious to criticism and meaningful reform. In face of such persistence and comeback, even across as significant a historical watershed as the end of the Cold War, historians and other social scientists in a variety of fields have embarked upon a different and novel approach, one which treats development *as history*.² In other words, to paraphrase Nick Cullather, they propose to use history as the methodology for studying and understanding development, rather than constructing development theories to explain history and to provide predictive models for the future.³

In this two-part essay, I review some of the most important contributions that

have been made over the past twenty years to this expanding field of historical scholarship. In part 1, I examine what might be termed the “first wave” of writing the history of development that emerged in the 1990s during the neoliberal moment. Poststructuralist analysts were the first to set out a genealogical framework, viewing development as a discursive regime formally inaugurated by the United States in 1949, when the “discovery” of mass poverty in the Third World came to preoccupy Western policy makers and political elites. Following on the heels of postdevelopment writers, scholars in the field of U.S. diplomatic history also began to investigate the history of modernization. As they have shown, the offer of technical and financial assistance as part of a “new deal” for the underdeveloped areas of the world was invariably tied to the U.S.-led campaign to counteract communist influence in these regions during the Cold War.

In part 2, I examine some of the more recent contributions that have presented an increasingly more nuanced picture of development. The postwar periodization of development, for example, has been criticized by historians who challenge the conventional starting date by calling attention to the continuities between late colonialism and contemporary development policies and practices. Others have sought to examine local development encounters and specific projects as they played out on the ground. More recently, some researchers have also begun to move away from the predominantly American-centered framework of earlier studies and to conceive of modernization as a global project. The next step, I contend, is to create a truly global and transnational history of development, one that brings together the literature on late colonialism and decolonization with the new international history of the Cold War, and that offers a more diverse, refined, and historically-informed reading of international development.

Development Studies and History

It seems relevant to begin with a bit of personal background, for I suspect my own trajectory may be fairly common. I began my academic career at the Centre for International Development Studies, University of Guelph, when I enrolled in a newly established master’s program in 1990. When I began the program I was brimming with enthusiasm, optimistic that I could make a difference in the world pursuing a hands-on career working with the poor in less-developed countries. Three years later, I was not so sure. We were introduced to a variety of multidisciplinary theories, concepts, and models, everything from modernization theory to models that helped you analyze how technologies are diffused and adapted to new cultural settings to using video as a participatory tool for community development. But above all, I remember learning that development was in a state of “crisis.” Development studies, it seemed, had reached an “impasse” signaling, as Colin Leys suggested, that the golden age of development theory had come to a close.⁴ I graduated from the program feeling disheartened and in serious doubt about pursuing a career where I might cause greater harm than good to the very people I intended to help.

It was at this point of uncertainty that I determined to learn more about how this elaborate network of institutions, programs, and practices called “development” had come about in the first place. How had we gotten to this point of apparent paralysis

and intellectual impasse? I decided to look back in the hope of finding a way forward. On the road to development's past, I soon discovered, there were many fellow travelers, who had had experiences similar to mine and who had come to similar conclusions. The disappointing track record of postwar economic planning and social engineering, coupled with the demise of the Cold War imperatives, had by the late 1980s and 1990s placed the very idea of intentional development into serious question. To many analysts it seemed the time had come to reassess the statist-developmental project, not only critically but historically.

This was not, to be sure, the first time history and development overlapped. In some ways, as Robert Bates points out, history and the study of development have always closely intersected: "To account for development, scholars often draw lessons from history: they extrapolate from what is 'known' to have happened in the past. As a consequence, the field belongs as much to historians as it does to social scientists."⁵ Perhaps the best-known example of the historian-turned-development-theorist is Walt Whitman Rostow, whose most well-known work, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, was as much a crystallization of the supposed lessons of Britain's historical experience as the first industrial nation as it was a guide for developing countries dreaming of a high mass consumption future modeled on the United States.⁶ Many other examples could be cited of scholars who have entered theoretical debates on contemporary development issues by extrapolating from the past.⁷ The use of historical parallels or lessons derived from historical models to support (or refute) theories of development or to justify specific policy objectives has remained an enduring feature of the field of development studies since its inception.⁸ More recently, the World Bank and other intergovernmental aid agencies have come to appreciate the importance of understanding the history of institutions conducive to economic growth, such as property rights, the rule of law, contracts and stable political processes, and the conditions under which such institutions are established.⁹ This has led to the emergence of more analytical approaches to assess the impact or "weight" of past policy decisions on contemporary developmental outcomes. Development economists, for example, have shown great interest in comparing divergent development trajectories that are associated with certain sets of institutions that can be traced back to different types of European colonization policies.¹⁰ This has encouraged economic historians to ask whether, and under what conditions, different colonizing powers were more successful than others in establishing institutions that promoted economic expansion.¹¹

What concerns me in this essay, however, is not the long-standing use (and often misuse) of history within development studies. The merits and pitfalls of such scholarship have long been debated. Rather, my interest in this essay lies in the way the relationship between history and development was fundamentally reconfigured in the 1990s, as first social scientists, and then professional historians, began to think critically and reflexively about development as a set of ideas, institutions, and practices that has a distinctive history of its own. This historicist approach, as Nick Cullather observed more than a decade ago, "puts the framework inside the frame. It treats development *as* history, as an artifact . . . and makes history the methodology for studying modernization, instead of the other way around."¹²

Precursors

To be fair, I should acknowledge some important, earlier efforts by scholars interested in tracing the origins and impact of development ideas and development studies. As far back as 1969, the conservative sociologist Robert Nisbet offered a critique of what he termed the fundamental concepts of developmentalism. He explored the way theories of social change—from the Greek concept of *physis* to the modern idea of progress to the central premises behind twentieth-century functionalism—were imbued with the biological metaphor of growth and the evolutionary life-cycle of organisms.¹³ For Nisbet, the idea that society and history progressed in a cumulative, directional, and irreversible manner, such as through the gradual realization of some latent potential or through a stage-by-stage process of succession, flew in the face of actual history, which was messy, unpredictable, and filled with conflict caused by exogenous factors.

If Nisbet can be credited with pioneering the history of ideas about social development, much the same could be said of Albert Hirschman's and H.W. Arndt's investigations of economic development. Arndt was the first economist to trace in some detail the history of thought about economic development, not only in academic writing but as an objective of state policy.¹⁴ Although not as searching or as philosophical as Nisbet, Arndt finds the origins or "prehistory" of such ideas embedded deep within Western civilization. The desire for "material progress," Arndt suggests, first becomes the object of state policy in Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, spreading thereafter to other regions as part of "reactive" nationalist ideologies.

Hirschman, who is credited as one of the pioneers of development economics, also expressed an interest in the history of economic ideas and the conditions under which his field of study emerged.¹⁵ His criticism of comprehensive planning and the predilection of early development economists for "balanced" or "big push" industrialization earned Hirschman a reputation for being, as he put it, "a demurrer within," while his concept of "backward linkage" has been widely applied in various historical studies of economic development.¹⁶ But what is most relevant for my purposes is Hirschman's recognition that development economics as a subdiscipline arose at a unique conjunctural moment, when the Keynesian revolution of the 1930s along with the success of the Marshall Plan in Western Europe after the war encouraged a group of economists to view the poorer regions or "underdeveloped areas" of the world as economically and structurally set apart from the advanced industrial nations. A different kind of economic analysis was thus required, one designed to overcome the distinctive problems of rural underemployment and late industrialization through public investment planning.

Arndt also sees the post-1945 years as marking a new phase during which, after a hiatus of nearly a century, economists such as Kurt Mandelbaum, Paul Rosenstein-Rodan, W. Arthur Lewis, Ragnar Nurske, Raúl Prebisch, Gunnar Myrdal, and Hans Singer among others returned to the classic problem of economic growth and in the process produced the seminal works, theories, and official reports of modern development economics.¹⁷ The ascendancy of development economics, however, was

relatively short lived. By the 1970s, Hirschman had sensed an increasing level of self-doubt and decline within the field as the so-called Third World countries became more diverse and differentiated, and as the subdiscipline itself became more highly specialized and fractured. Arndt concurred, observing that by the 1970s the primacy of development economics was rapidly being eroded as the goals of development thinking shifted toward social concerns such as health, education, nutrition, poverty eradication, and the fulfillment of basic needs, and as opponents on both the left and right of the political spectrum began to voice powerful counter critiques.

In the realm of political development studies, the most important early contributions came from liberal political scientists, including Robert Packenham and Irene Gendzier.¹⁸ Both Packenham and Gendzier were interested in examining theories of political development devised by American social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s and their relationship and bearing on the doctrines that informed U.S. policy makers' and government officials' views regarding political change in the Third World. Did such theories influence or shape U.S. foreign aid and technical assistance policies aimed at managing the process of political change? For Packenham, writing in the early 1970s, the concern was less with actual political trends or the effects of aid than "in what the officials and social scientists wanted the trends to be, what conditions they thought promoted these trends, and what they supposed to be the consequences of such desirable trends."¹⁹ He suggested there was little direct or even indirect evidence of academic theories influencing the policy doctrines and decisions of government aid officials, whose exposure to such theories was limited and whose actions were largely pragmatic. Rather, the origins and persistence of the political development doctrines that underpinned the U.S. foreign aid program, and their strong resemblance to social scientific theories, reflected the implicit assumptions shared by both officials and theorists. This consensus, Packenham argued, was rooted in a liberal ideological tradition that grew out of the unique historical experience of the United States: economic growth and development were seen as straightforward and as going hand-in-hand with political stability and moderate democratic reform; radical politics and revolutionary change by definition were regarded as antithetical and threatening.²⁰

Published a dozen years later and in the midst of growing pessimism over the meaning of development and modernization, Gendzier's analysis displays a noticeably more critical edge. In contrast to Packenham, Gendzier finds that policy-oriented social science was paramount to forging a U.S. foreign policy consensus.²¹ She notes that government support for development-related social science research increased substantially from the time of the Eisenhower administration onward. This enabled a select group of academic consultants and specialists, well placed between government agencies and key academic institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to exercise an inordinate degree of influence in shaping both official and academic development discourse. Their views on political development, according to Gendzier, reflected less the realities of Third World politics than the internal biases of political theory that stretched back to the crisis of liberal democracy following the First World War. Their views were also influenced by the domestic climate in the United States during the Cold War, and especially the bitter debate on McCarthyism,

which intensified the fear of popular participation and the potential dangers of mass-based movements in the Third World and led many policy-oriented intellectuals to favor the managerial role of political elites in maintaining order and stability.

The work of Nisbet, Arndt, Hirschman, Packenham, and Gendzier raised important questions about the broader intellectual and political origins and context of development and, in retrospect, helped lay the groundwork for much subsequent research and writing on the subject. But as social scientists operating within their respective disciplines (sociology, economics, political science), they wrote for a fairly specialized audience. It formed part of an internal disciplinary critique, written from the inside with the intent of reforming rather than radically overturning the structure. Packenham's goal was to expose the rigidities derived from an overly dogmatic reliance on liberal constitutionalism in the hope that theorists might become more cognizant and critical of their own premises, but this did not imply for him the abandonment of that tradition in its entirety. The same might be said for Gendzier: "Reconsidering the genre of Political Development studies . . . is not equivalent to writing an obituary for a dead intellectual form. Rather, it is an effort at demystification, at the uncovering of the intellectual and political coordinates of the interpretation of Political Development."²² And, in a similar fashion, Arndt concluded: "There will always be disputation about the uses to which our expanding productive forces should be put. But only an extreme pessimist about the folly of mankind would deny the benefit of the increased freedom to choose that comes with economic development."²³

These earlier internal critiques failed to spark wider interest or a broader literature on the history of development. The moment, it seems, was not yet ripe for these ideas to be taken up in force by other scholars and professional historians. It would take the rupture of the collapse of communism in 1989–90 and the demise of the Cold War to create the intellectual conditions for a critical deconstruction and historicization of development. As long as one could still point to "actually existing socialism" as an ideological alternative to market capitalism, the basic premises and logic that had underpinned state-led development since World War II remained intact. It seems that the owl of developmental Minerva, as Nils Gilman puts it, was not yet ready to begin its flight. This would occur "only with the onset of dusk" on the postwar, Cold War epoch that began in dramatic fashion with the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989.²⁴ It was Francis Fukuyama who captured the moment best, famously declaring the "end of history," by which he meant the final march in the worldwide expansion of market capitalism and liberal democracy was about to begin.²⁵

The "Crisis of Development" and the Neoliberal Moment

By the early 1990s, the pessimists that Arndt had dismissed no longer appeared so extreme. More radical detractors, who wanted to tear down rather than merely remodel the edifice of development and all of its supports, replaced liberal reformers like Packenham and Gendzier. In the wake of the post-Cold War rupture, there was growing skepticism from all sides of the political spectrum concerning the results of state intervention and the performance of state institutions generally. This skepticism, which made the critical study of development seem so timely, was rooted in the demise of the post-World War II international economic order, which, as Eric

Helleiner has noted, began with the U.S. abandonment of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates in 1971, and the rise in oil prices following the 1973 OPEC oil embargo.²⁶ These events triggered a general downturn in global economic activity that gave rise in the West to high unemployment coupled with unprecedentedly high levels of inflation. For most Third World countries, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system and the subsequent recession of the late 1970s resulted in lower and even negative growth rates.²⁷ Faced with stagnating economies and declining per capita income levels, Third World states increased their overseas borrowing until, by the mid-1980s, most were faced with serious debt servicing and balance of payment problems.

The upheavals of the 1970s triggered what Helleiner has described as a “crisis of ideological hegemony,” resulting in a paradigmatic shift away from the Keynesian economic framework of the post-1945 period toward a reassertion of the central tenets of free market economics. The full implications of this shift were not felt until the 1980s when the neoclassical counterrevolution in economic thought, combined with the political ascendancy of conservative governments, forced the dismantling of Keynesianism and welfare state policies, first in the United States and Britain in 1979–80, and then in the other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries by the mid-1980s. Indeed, as Helleiner notes, “By the early 1990s, an almost fully liberal order had been created across the OECD region, giving market actors a degree of freedom they had not held since the 1920s and completely overturning the Bretton Woods order.”²⁸

The triumph of market fundamentalism, or “neoliberalism,” as it is often labeled, had an equally profound impact on developing countries. Economists including P. T. Bauer, Deepak Lal, Bela Balassa, and Ian Little attributed the retarding of development in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to inefficient and excessive state intervention in the economy and called for a new vision of growth based on a return to free market principles.²⁹ The writings of P. T. (Lord) Bauer were particularly influential in challenging the assumed benefits of foreign aid and state controls. Aid, according to Bauer, was more likely to retard economic development than promote it, since aid largely went to governments and thus diverted resources and attention away from productive, market activities. Contrary to aid advocates, Bauer maintained that aid-supported state spending mostly benefited political rulers and their own personal, financial, and political interests, rather than raising income levels or helping the poor.³⁰ The neoliberal counterrevolution, in turn, underpinned the World Bank’s and the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) new market-orientated lending policies, including the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that were conditionally imposed on many Third World states during the international debt crisis of the 1980s.

The neoliberal ascendancy of the 1980s would have lasting repercussions for development theory and studies, whose central tenets had up to this point been girded by the same postwar economic framework described above.³¹ The initial response of development theorists, as well as those within the wider development community, was varied and mixed. For more policy-oriented scholars like John Toye, who considered the views of both the counterrevolutionary right and the left to be untenable, the answer lay in a more pragmatic, consensual approach that would transcend the two

extremes.³² Rational-choice theorists also sought a middle ground between market and state in which development efforts would be based on community and civic engagement—or what was increasingly referred to in the 1990s as “civil society.”³³ The World Bank and other international agencies also plowed ahead with, as Colin Leys put it, “an increasingly incoherent discourse of opposites: the state is needed, after all, but not too much, and only when the market doesn’t work well, democracy is important but not if it leads to inappropriate demands for redistribution; and so on.”³⁴ But for many scholars, such eclecticism in policy reflected the fact that development theory had lost its way; a sense that its most basic premises appeared fundamentally flawed. Numerous efforts were initiated to try to move beyond the theoretical impasse and devise a new paradigm to anchor the field.³⁵ Such efforts, however, could not hide the fact that support for the developmentalist state had been profoundly, if not permanently, shaken. The neoliberal triumph marked the effective end of postwar development theory and policy as the dominance of international capital markets undermined the ability of national governments throughout the world to act as the prime movers of economic planning and social welfare.³⁶

The attacks of the market fundamentalists on developmentalism and the demise of the development state in most parts of the world seemed to have an intellectually liberating effect to the extent that from the late 1980s onward investigators began to look at development from a new angle: not from a partisan position within the various ideological camps but from a detached viewpoint which tried to denaturalize and contextualize development. The most radical challenge came from scholars who sought to move beyond the deadlock in development studies by formulating a critique of the problem of Third World poverty and underdevelopment based on poststructuralist analysis. In no uncertain terms, intellectuals such as Claude Alvares, Arturo Escobar, Gustavo Esteva, Ashis Nandy, Gilbert Rist, Wolfgang Sachs, and Vandana Shiva among others argued that the much-vaunted crisis was a reflection of development’s bankruptcy as a concept.³⁷ Indeed for some, as I noted earlier, it was time to sever its hold on global culture and to prepare the ground for the postdevelopment world to come.³⁸

To their credit, the efforts of the self-styled postdevelopment writers to undertake an “archaeology of development” helped open the door to the possibility of putting “the framework inside the frame” and making development the object of historical investigation. At the same time, however, the limitations of postdevelopment approaches need to be recognized. The charge most often made is that they aimed to critique rather than prescribe.³⁹ By jettisoning the idea of development in its entirety, they were unable to offer constructive ways forward. There had of course been substantive criticisms of development before, but what was distinctive about the 1990s was the almost universal rejection—from both the left and the right—of the state as an agent of progress and national liberation and, simultaneously, a renewed interest in social institutions and movements operating independently of and in opposition to the state. This reconfiguration of the debate around rolling back the state and championing new social movements (and “civil society” more generally) undoubtedly represented an important shift, signifying that development as a discourse was no longer framed by the logic of the post-1945 Cold War.⁴⁰ But in hindsight what is

perhaps most striking is the consistent logic operating in many of the studies produced in the late 1980s and 1990s, irrespective of one's ideological position.

Beneath the radical veneer of postdevelopmentalism lies an essentially nostalgic and conservative core that shares much in common with other responses to the crisis of development, in particular with neoliberalism.⁴¹ As Jan Nederveen Pieterse pointed out in one of the more penetrating reviews at the time:

If we read critiques of development dirigism, such as Deepak Lal's critique of state-centred development economics—which helped set the stage for the neoconservative turn in development—side by side with post-development critiques of development power . . . the parallels are striking. Both agree on state failure although for different reasons . . . Arguably, the net political effect turns out to be much the same. In other words, there is an elective affinity between neoliberalism and the development agnosticism of post-development.⁴²

To be clear, I am not suggesting we conflate the postdevelopmentalist literature with neoliberalism or that we see them as occupying identical ideological positions. Even though they both share a critical attitude toward the state, there are fundamental, philosophical differences that separate the two approaches. While neoliberal reformers saw greater market integration as a *development alternative*, antidevelopment critics proposed an *alternative to development* that rejected modernity altogether.⁴³ Nevertheless, given the specific historical conjuncture of the 1980s and 1990s, postdevelopment's rejection of state intervention and embrace of grassroots movements and local self-reliance paradoxically aided the neoliberal project for restructuring global capitalism. The message that peasants and other local communities would be fine if we just left them alone was in many ways complementary to the argument that markets work best when free individuals are left to their own devices, undisturbed by the powers of the state. Even more critically, the romanticization of the rural Third World or "noble South" which informs much of the postdevelopment literature leads to a downplaying of conflict and divisions within local communities, especially the disregard of class interests and socioeconomic inequality. Such a neopopulist position, as Tom Brass has long argued, not only reifies peasant communities and indigenous culture, but also inadvertently reinforces the antistatist/pro-market policy agenda of neoliberalism.⁴⁴ It is for this reason that I think it is important to situate the first wave of historical writings on development, most of which were influenced by the postdevelopment critique in one way or another, within the same broad, historical moment as the neoliberal revolution.⁴⁵

The First Wave of Writing Development as History

One of the most influential critiques of the development industry to appear at this moment was James Ferguson's *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*.⁴⁶ Ferguson combined critical anthropology with a Foucauldian framework of analysis to explain the conceptual and institutional machinery of development and its operation in the small, land-locked African country of Lesotho between 1975 and 1984. For him, the most immediate questions that required explanation were, first, how "development" as a dominant problematic

worked in practice, and second, what were its actual outcomes and social effects? Although Ferguson's study focused on what might be called an archaeology of development in the present, in the preface to the book he suggested that the next logical step of critical inquiry was a "genealogy" or "detailed historical analysis of the origins and transformations" of development. "How and why this central value came to exist," Ferguson opined, "is one question that is raised by the dominance of the 'development' problematic. . . . This book marks the beginning of an inquiry, not the end . . . but it may perhaps give an indication of why it is necessary to question such value in the first place."⁴⁷

In the wake of Ferguson's innovative study, a number of researchers sought to do just that. For the first time, scholars probed the larger questions surrounding the genesis and meaning of development and examined the wider political and historical context in which it was first conceived as a specific domain of inquiry. Their work represents the initial phase of development historiography, which spanned roughly the decade of the 1990s. Looking back we can discern several broad scholarly trends in the literature as a whole. In the remainder of part 1, I will look in some detail at what I see as the most pronounced of these trends, not only for what they tell us about the initial formulation of development history in the 1990s but also with an eye to the limitations that more recent studies—the subject of part 2 of the essay—have identified and are currently moving to address.

1. Development as an Intellectual and Ideological Project

The most significant feature of the first wave of development history was the predominate focus of researchers on the conceptual or intellectual framework of development, variously described as discourses, ideologies, doctrines, texts, and so on. This was particularly (though not exclusively) true of authors who described their writing as poststructuralist or postdevelopment. For the critical anthropologist Arturo Escobar, whose work on the "genealogy of development" in many ways anticipated Ferguson's own thinking, development is a discursive field or regime that sought *but failed* to impose Western modernity on the rest of the world.⁴⁸ Although there are important differences between the work of Ferguson and Escobar, each conceives of development as a form of discourse or "conceptual apparatus" in the Foucauldian sense, not only comprising a set of theories and representations but also giving rise to an array of concrete practices, both discursive and nondiscursive, through which poverty is problematized.⁴⁹ And while Ferguson is careful to ground his analysis of what development does in a particular context, he too aspires to a more generalized critique of development as a global, historical project. As Ferguson concluded: "By uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of 'development' is the principle means through which the question of poverty is de-politicised in the world today."⁵⁰

The work of Michel Foucault, as well as that of the literary theorist Edward Said, influenced Ferguson and Escobar and many others whose work is associated, directly or indirectly, with the postdevelopment wave of the 1990s. Particularly important are Foucault's conceptions of power and discourse, in which the construction of

knowledge is inseparable from relations of power.⁵¹ For Foucault, discourse is *sui generis*, which does not so much reflect as actually construct or invent reality and in so doing marginalizes alternative ways of thinking about the subject or object of its analysis. Projecting these ideas onto the Third World, Said conceives of the notion of Orientalism as a systematic discipline by which Western culture has been “able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.”⁵² Under the impact of postmodernist and postcolonial thought a number of studies appeared which sought to interrogate what might be called the imaginary of development.⁵³

Two of the more notable contributions along these lines are Gilbert Rist’s *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* and Jonathan Crush’s edited volume *The Power of Development*.⁵⁴ The emphasis of these writers is on the metaphorical language of development, on viewing development as a form of writing or “text,” with narrative qualities, story plot lines, and various actors. Scrutinizing the discourse of development thus requires tracking its “master metaphors” and mapping the recurrence of its key ideas and imagery across various contexts. The aim for Rist is to “particularize” development, by rendering its universalizing conceptual claims and practices as “provincial” and even “exotic.”⁵⁵ His book provides a fairly descriptive account, piecing together the canon of “great texts” with “what seemed to us the most significant ‘episodes’ in the history of ‘development.’”⁵⁶ He takes his readers on a grand tour of the West’s preoccupation with the “myth” of development from antiquity and early Christianity to the twentieth-century “development era.” In the end, however, what we are left with is not so much a deconstruction of development as discourse, than a demonstration of the cultural and historical importance of a concept that has come to occupy a central place in what both Rist and Escobar term the anthropology of Western modernity.⁵⁷

Crush’s collection is more substantive, but he too conceives of development as fundamentally textual. Although careful to note that language is never self-referential and that discourse justifies very real interventions and practices, Crush focuses his analysis primarily on “the reports, plans, analyses, evaluations, assessments, consultancies, papers, books, policies, speeches, discussions, debates, presentations and conversations that circulate within and through the apparatus of agencies and institutions of the development machine.”⁵⁸ One of the most striking features of this language of development, as Crush observes, is its obliteration of the past: “Most [development] plans contain a formulaic bow to the previous plan period . . . But prior histories of the object of development—the people, country, region, sector or zone—are deemed irrelevant . . . The past is impervious to change, untouchable and irredeemable.”⁵⁹ This stripping away of the object’s history is accompanied by its reinsertion into standard typologies, or what Emery Roe has termed “development narratives,” that form blueprints for intervention.⁶⁰

Several of the essays in Crush’s book concentrate on tracing the central tropes and metaphors that lie at the heart of these development narratives. Timothy Mitchell examines how Egypt’s economic development since World War II has been invariably framed as a problem of geography versus demography. The Nile Valley is imagined as a narrow strip of fertile land, surrounded by desert and crowded with millions of

rapidly multiplying inhabitants. The effect of this imagery, according to Mitchell, is to confine discussions of poverty in this country within the seemingly natural boundaries of overpopulation and land shortage, which in turn shapes the kinds of solutions that follow. Questions of unequal distribution and access to land, for example, are never raised in reports by leading development agencies such as USAID. Instead, programs emphasize the more efficient management of existing resources through greater mechanization, fertilizers, improved seed varieties, and new irrigation methods.⁶¹ Michael Watts, in his essay, explores the various strands of modernity that emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and later coalesced into the mid-twentieth-century meaning of development: from theories of linear progress and evolution, to the normative efforts to make society and subjects more legible and governable, to classical political economy's legitimization of the desire for accumulation. In doing so Watts underscores the recurring imagery of "crisis," which he stresses is not simply a preoccupation of today's pundits but rather something that has been built into the process from its beginning. Development, Watts contends, is rooted in the paradoxical unity of modernity itself, in the "creative destruction" of capitalism, which, as Karl Marx put it, unleashes a storm of disintegration and renewal in its perpetual transformation of the means of production and exchange.⁶² From this perspective, crisis must be seen as intrinsic to development itself, the consequence of its restlessness, as well as the precondition for its own inevitable reinvention in a distinctive and yet strangely familiar guise.

Poststructuralist and postdevelopment critics were not the only ones in search of development's tangled and troubled past. Although somewhat delayed in their response, by the end of the decade, scholars interested in U.S. relations with Africa, Asia, and Latin America had launched their own, related set of inquiries into the history of "modernization." Nick Cullather's pioneering essay "Development? It's History" set the tone. Cullather suggested that a historicist approach offered "a way of writing about development without accepting its clichés, and to see the record of Americans' cynical, heroic, disastrous, occasionally inspired, and benevolent attempts at global humanitarianism in all of their moral and political complexity."⁶³ Much like their postdevelopment counterparts, historians of U.S. foreign relations centered their analyses initially on modernization as an intellectual and cultural project. In this sense, their work is clearly reflective of the first wave of development historiography with its genealogical interest in discourses, languages, essential texts, and vocabularies.⁶⁴

The two texts that best capture the initial concerns of historical inquiry into the origins and influence of modernization theory in the United States are Michael Latham's *Modernization as Ideology* and Nils Gilman's *Mandarins of the Future*, both published in the early 2000s but conceived of during the 1990s.⁶⁵ Both Latham and Gilman concentrated their efforts on examining the intellectual and institutional context in which modernization emerged as the dominant social scientific paradigm within the American academy in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and how in turn it provided an ideological and conceptual framework that helped shape U.S. foreign policy, especially during the presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Both authors were clearly influenced by the work of predecessors such as Pakenham and Gendzier, but as historians they grounded their work much more firmly in

archival materials. Moreover, they were no longer interested in reforming political development studies or making its theories and practices more effective but rather in treating modernization as an ideological and cultural artifact, which needs to be analyzed on a deeper level than as a justification for American strategic and economic interests. As Latham put it, “By returning to the era in which modernization dominated the field of inquiry and examining its relationship to the conduct of American foreign relations, I have sought to show that it was not merely a social scientific formulation. Modernization, I argue, was also an ideology, a conceptual framework that articulated a common collection of assumptions about the nature of American society and its ability to transform a world perceived as both materially and culturally deficient.”⁶⁶ Similarly, Gilman surveys the major trends and great texts of postwar American social science, from Parsonian structural-functionalism to behavioralism and comparative politics to Rostovian economic growth theory; but more critically, he demonstrates how the question of modernity was central to these ideas and debates. It served as an interconnecting thread that linked, as Gilman puts it, “American social scientists’ efforts to build a comprehensive theory not only for understanding what was happening in postcolonial regions, but also for promoting change that would make these regions become more like ‘us’—and less like the Russians or the Chinese.”⁶⁷

This emphasis on the close linkages among knowledge, the exercise of power, and cultural meaning reflects the widespread influence of postmodern and postcolonial theory on historical scholarship at the time, which both authors acknowledged.⁶⁸ The influence is particularly strong for Latham, whose analysis turns on the significance of ideas and culture in shaping the objectives of American foreign policy. For Latham, modernization theory was important not simply as a rhetorical tool to justify particular strategic and economic imperatives. Its real power lay in its ideological functions, not in the sense of a conspiracy or reification of consciousness but as a broader worldview that resonated with long-held assumptions and beliefs about American identity and its historical mission in the world.⁶⁹ In the context of decolonization and the battle for hearts and minds at the height of the Cold War, modernization discourse provided an alternative framework to both the legacy of European colonialism and the revolutionary and radical challenge of communism. Moreover, by presenting America’s path to modernity as a liberal and consensual model to be emulated by others and facilitated by U.S. capital investment, technical assistance, and cultural influence, modernization theorists helped reaffirm the belief in American exceptionalism. They forged, as Latham remarks, “an appealing identity for America as a progressive nation assisting others in their fight against poverty, oppression, and debilitating fatalism.”⁷⁰ And by the same token, they suggested that the transformation of “traditional” cultural attitudes and forms of authority through exposure to and dissemination of “modern,” U.S. cultural values and practices was the key to Third World development.

Modernization theory, Latham argues, provided a perceptual and cognitive template that helped shape the goals and intended outcomes of U.S. policy making in the 1960s, playing a critical role in programs such as the Alliance for Progress in Latin America, the Peace Corps, and the Strategic Hamlet Program in Vietnam. It also

constrained the way policy makers viewed social change in the Third World, forcing analyses into an inflexible framework that ignored the need for greater understanding of local conditions and their historical and cultural context. As these programs began to show signs of shortcomings, criticism was directed to questions of corruption, poor coordination, and administration, rather than to the deeper ideological assumptions that lay at the heart of the mission itself.

While less concerned with actual government programs, Gilman's analysis also highlights the important intersection between U.S. foreign relations and American culture, noting that postwar intellectuals "took their ideas about 'modernity' from discourses about American national identity that were taking place at the same time as the formation of the modernization paradigm."⁷¹ The real strength of Gilman's analysis lies in his careful attention to the way certain ideas were exchanged and elevated to hegemonic status, while others were marginalized, by the personal interactions and collaborations of scholars operating through specific institutional networks with strong ties to private funding organizations and government agencies and departments. At the heart of the book are three case studies of different academic institutional networks: the Harvard Department of Social Relations, the Social Science Research Council's Committee on Comparative Politics, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for International Studies. Gilman shows how prominent liberal social scientists operating through these institutional channels were able to attract significant funding from private foundations such as Rockefeller, Ford, and Carnegie as well as from the federal government for policy-oriented research, training, and conferences. Through this closely spun web of institutions, academic experts, and public and private funding, ideas about modernization began to crystallize.

Contrary to common depictions of modernization as essentially a conservative ideology, Gilman shows that in the context of the 1950s it expressed the hopes and ideals of postwar American liberals "and that its history cannot be understood apart from the fate of that liberalism."⁷² Although they agreed that economic growth stood at the core, modernization theorists believed that making people and societies modern involved a much more sweeping transformation of their entire social, political, psychological, and cultural forms of organization. In their view, the state—guided by technical experts and social planners—was the best means for rationally ordering and directing the potentially destabilizing changes that marked the transition to modernity. In seeking to explain the hold that such theories had on postwar academics and policy makers, Gilman argues that modernization theory was not simply a response to external challenges but reflected wider domestic sentiments about American identity. In many ways, their attitudes and perceptions about non-Western peoples tell us as much about how Americans see themselves as about how they see those living abroad. "Modernization theory," Gilman astutely observes, "was thus the foreign policy counterpart to 'social modernism' at home, namely the idea that a meliorist, rationalizing, benevolent, technocratic state could solve all social and especially economic ills . . . In large measure the rise and decline of modernization theory mirrored the rise and decline of faith in welfare-state modernism in the United States."⁷³

As important as the work of Latham and Gilman was in opening up modernization theory to historical analysis, their focus, like the poststructuralist approach to the wider history of the idea of development, remained squarely on the discourse rather than how this discourse may have affected the lives of people living in the Third World, or how such theories were put into practice in the form of specific projects or policy initiatives. The emphasis on the discursive side of development has remained an enduring characteristic of many studies of development history right up to the present day. Although the historiography of development has become more cognizant of its fragmentary and multivariant nature, it is still the case that, in one form or another, many writers remain predominantly concerned with development as an intellectual and conceptual project.⁷⁴ But what is even more pertinent, and what is surveyed in some detail below, is the way this focus on the discursive nature and power of modernization and development came to so thoroughly prescribe both the parameters and limitations of the field during the first phase of development historiography.

II. Development as Monolithic and Unchanging

Perhaps the most contentious outcome of the initial preoccupation with discourse and language has been the tendency for analysts to overgeneralize, and to render development crudely as an undifferentiated and unvarying hegemonic force. Most research produced in the 1990s depicted development in totalizing and unchanging terms. Arturo Escobar's portrait of development as a homogenizing, disciplinary power is perhaps the example that comes most immediately to mind, but Escobar was not alone.⁷⁵ Another influential contributor was James C. Scott, whose highly acclaimed book *Seeing Like a State* criticizes what Scott terms "authoritarian high modernism," by which he means both the dream of administratively ordering nature and society and the unrestricted use of modern state power as an instrument for fulfilling such an ambition.⁷⁶

The work of both authors is ambitious in scope. The subject of Escobar's study, for example, is nothing less than how development has come to define, and even produce, the Third World. He describes development as not merely a combination of various elements (e.g., the process of capital formation, new cultural attitudes, and new institutions and planning agencies) but, more importantly, a system of relations that "establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise; it sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory, or object to emerge and be named, analyzed, and eventually transformed into a policy or a plan."⁷⁷ Moreover, as his critics have pointed out, Escobar's analysis leaves us with a paradigm that is not only all-encompassing and all-consuming but also conspiratorial in design.⁷⁸ For Escobar, development is implicitly an intentional imposition and assertion of control by Western institutions and policy elites over the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

For Scott, it is the unquestioning faith in scientific and technical progress and in the ability to rationally order, plan, and control all aspects of human society and the natural world that distinguishes the high modernist's creed.⁷⁹ It is a belief that appeals

to bureaucratic elites, planners, engineers, and technicians of all political stripes, but especially to those who see their goals as progressive or revolutionary, in the sense of wanting to bring about changes for the betterment or improvement of humanity. And yet it is this ideology in combination with the unleashing of modern state power that was responsible for some of the most tragic episodes of social engineering of the twentieth century, including the collectivization of Soviet agriculture and the ujaama villagization schemes in Tanzania. The hubris of state officials, planners, and experts, Scott suggests, leads them to accept abstract, technical knowledge uncritically and to dismiss local, practical know-how and skills, or *mētis* as he refers to it, as backward and irrelevant. He sees this flagrant disregard of the important role of local knowledge and practice as the primary reason that so many of these schemes have ended in failure, often despite years of careful planning and research.

Anyone familiar with the history of Third World development can certainly appreciate Escobar's and Scott's frustration with the omnipotent/omniscient aspirations of development and the hubris of modernist ideology. One can point to an array of state projects where the kind of myopic approach they describe has led to unintended and often disastrous consequences for local communities and people. Few observers would object to Scott's lauding of "the indispensable role of practical knowledge, informal processes, and improvisation."⁸⁰ Indeed, critics of orthodox development economics and tropical agricultural science such as Michael Lipton, Roberts Chambers, and Paul Richards have been making this case since the 1970s and 1980s.⁸¹

The difficulty with this kind of generalized rendering is its tendency to draw too sharp a distinction between modernity and the modernist faith on the one hand, and local practices and belief systems on the other. It tends to cast them, for heuristic purposes, as two opposing and mutually exclusive forms of knowledge and logic. This binary framework can be seen, for example, in Scott's critique of modern scientific agriculture, which draws heavily on the work of Richards.⁸² High modernist agriculture is driven by the logic of simplification and standardization, with crops grown in fixed, pure stands and bred for mechanization and the highest yields, whereas local practices are invariably more complex, based on shifting cultivation and polycropping techniques that give farmers greater flexibility and adaptability and fulfill a diversity of aims. In a similar way, Escobar portrays development as an all-encompassing "knowledge-power regime" fabricated by the West—a vaguely defined and undifferentiated entity—which stands in sharp contrast to Third World communities and grassroots actors, whose local cultures and non-Western belief systems, by their very nature as the other, are defined as countermodernist alternatives.

Ironically, given their principled stance against imperializing metanarratives, Escobar and Scott, as well as other poststructuralist and neopopulist writers, have found themselves in the awkward and contradictory position of reverting to metanarratives of their own. For Escobar, at least, there is a recognition that the problems that development has been designed to address are, after all, real (and not simply social fabrications), and thus "the process of deconstructing and dismantling has to be accompanied by that of constructing new ways of seeing and acting."⁸³ In his postdevelopment paradigm, the state, along with various intergovernmental and

international agencies, has become the adversary, while grassroots social movements, indigenous peoples, and peasant farmers are the would-be protagonists.

Similarly with Scott, one gets the sense that if only the maligned and invasive state would get out of the way, then independent peasant farmers, rural villagers, and indigenous hill peoples would be empowered to live autonomously in self-sufficient and locally appropriate ways.⁸⁴ Thus, despite Scott's and Escobar's ardent wish to challenge the totalizing claims of modernity, their scholarship oddly tends to reinforce, by inversion, the same essentialized dichotomies. As Arun Agrawal observes: "In posing the dualisms of local and global, indigenous and western, traditional and scientific, society and state—and locating the possibility of change only in one of these opposed pairs—one is forced to draw lines that are potentially ridiculous, and ultimately indefensible."⁸⁵

What is more, the logic of Western modernity appears unyielding and unchanging. Despite the many twists and incarnations of the past sixty years, development for Escobar was and remains in essence a project designed to bring about the conditions for the reproduction of the world capitalist system, and more generally the Westernization of the Third World. Escobar is quite clear on this point: "To be sure, new objects have been included, new modes of operation introduced, and a number of variables modified . . . yet the same set of relations among these elements continues to be established by the discursive practices of the institutions involved. Moreover, seemingly opposed options can easily coexist within the same discursive field . . . In other words, although the discourse has gone through a series of structural changes, the architecture of the discursive formation laid down in the period 1945–1955 has remained unchanged, allowing the discourse to adapt to new conditions."⁸⁶ Scott takes a strikingly similar position on the logic of high modernism, which in his narrative is always the same, no matter the context, be it central Europe in the late eighteenth century or Soviet Russia in the 1930s or postcolonial Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. In all of these cases, Scott sees the central problem as one of legibility; in other words, the goal of modern statecraft is to make society legible (and thus easier to manage and control), through processes of rationalization, standardization, and simplification.

The stark contrasts and sweeping generalizations that underpin such arguments simply do not hold up to closer scrutiny. Much of *Seeing Like a State*, as Mark Tauger strikingly demonstrates, is flawed by Scott's misreading of his own evidence or the omission of conflicting evidence, such that it is difficult to take the work seriously as a piece of historical (rather than polemical) writing.⁸⁷ He downplays or disregards cases where the state provides resources and assistance to its constituents, just as he misconstrues the actions of grassroots movements as resistance against the state when often they are just the opposite: attempts to engage the state and make it more responsive to their interests and needs.⁸⁸ Escobar, as noted above, also minimizes the importance of diverse and multiple discourses of development, seeing it instead as one unitary and undifferentiated mass.⁸⁹ "Ironically," as Dane Kennedy remarks in reference to postcolonial theory generally, "this stress on the power of the West countenances the neglect of the power as it was actually exercised in [specific contexts], ignoring 'its plural and particularized expressions.' Further, it fails to appreciate the

uncertainties, inconsistencies, modifications, and contradictions that afflicted Western efforts to impose its will on other peoples.”⁹⁰

For both authors, development projects and schemes of modern statecraft are designed *sui generis* “from above and from the center.” Local and native peoples, conversely, are antithetically opposed to the imposition of the state’s unwanted modernity and desire nothing more than to be left alone. Their first response to such interventions, according to Scott, is evasion, and for this reason they must then be “captured” through the creation of sharply demarcated and controlled state spaces.⁹¹ In the process, preexisting communities and ways of life are not only reconfigured; they are dislocated and very often eliminated. What this kind of Manichaeic analysis overlooks, however, is the fact that very often state projects are themselves responses to social, economic, and political crises, either real or imagined, that threaten the legitimacy and authority of the regime. Historically, as Cowen and Shenton have argued persuasively, development as an intentional practice, as opposed to development as an immanent process of “natural” or spontaneous change, has been invoked by state officials and agents as a way to *reassert* order over the uncertainty and societal crises brought on by material, usually capitalist, transformations.⁹²

Despite such criticisms, similar notions of development as a unitary and unvarying enterprise have continued to influence the way many scholars conceptualize the problem. In the introduction to *Seeing Like a State*, Scott noted that an early draft of his manuscript contained a case study of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which was ultimately omitted out of concern for the book’s length.⁹³ Perhaps it is fitting, then, to end this section with a more recent analysis in which the TVA does feature prominently, David Ekbladh’s *Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order*.⁹⁴ Ekbladh stresses the importance of analyzing the domestic roots of U.S. modernization, which he sees originating well before the watershed of World War II, as well as placing American versions of development within a broader, global dialogue involving a multiplicity of approaches. In part 2 of this essay I will return to Ekbladh’s proposal of taking a “wider and longer view” of development, but for now my focus is on the heart of his argument: his interpretation of the TVA as an influential, exportable model of development.

The real crucible for Ekbladh is the social and economic crises unleashed by the Great Depression. New rival ideologies of modernity emanating from Benito Mussolini’s regime in Italy, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union all seemed to point toward the state as the instrument best equipped to harness the powers of science, technology, and rational planning for the benefit of humanity. In the face of such challenges, liberals and internationalists searched for an alternative model of redemption and found it, according to Ekbladh, in the American South with that wonder of hydraulic engineering and regional development planning, the TVA. The TVA was a total, multipurpose project involving flood control through the construction of some thirty dams, hydroelectric power, irrigation, river navigation, public health programs, malaria control, new housing, community planning, education, library services, and the resettlement of flooded areas to new model towns. It also involved innovative forms of coordination between federal agencies, state and local governments, and regional universities, which, as one of its directors, David Lilienthal recognized,

allowed the TVA to be promoted as something exceptionally American—a new kind of decentralized administration that was more adaptable and inclusive of local participation. In addition, Ekbladh observes, “The experiment in the valley did more than inspire discussion; it brought action. Various groups, particularly NGOs already invested in development missions, gravitated to the TVA concept . . . Partisans at the Rockefeller Foundation took that faith a step further, seeing it as a template for economic and social development they could actively export across the globe.”⁹⁵

World War II delayed such actions, but it also inspired new thinking about the building of a liberal international order once it was over. The older discourse of reconstruction was supplanted by a more expansive view of development, one increasingly referred to as “modernization,” to which the TVA as a liberal model of large-scale planning and development was tightly yoked. The transition from world war to Cold War elevated the stakes, motivating the U.S. government to assume a far more active role in what was increasingly referred to as the “underdeveloped areas.” The region of the world where the U.S. modernization mission would be most keenly felt, according to Ekbladh, was Asia: first China, then South Korea, and eventually Vietnam. Asia was the Cold War’s key ideological battleground, where the largest subvention of U.S. economic and technical assistance was expended to contain the specter of communism.

In this global struggle, the TVA model was conjured up as a Cold War weapon. Numerous large multipurpose projects, modeled directly on the TVA and often with TVA experts, were built across the Third World, from India to the Middle East to Ghana. But perhaps the most fateful TVA-inspired proposal was one that never materialized. A multilateral plan for the development of the Mekong River, which spanned across several Southeast Asian countries including Vietnam, was originally devised with backing from the UN and the Mekong Committee in the 1950s. It was not, however, until 1965 that the Johnson administration embraced it as a means of dealing with the social and political fallout of the escalation of the war in Vietnam. A U.S.–South Vietnamese Joint Development Group, led by Lilienthal, was set up to create the blueprints for the postwar reconstruction of the country. It envisioned remaking the Mekong Delta region into the breadbasket of Southeast Asia through a proposed Mekong Delta Development Authority (MDDA), modeled directly on the TVA. The MDDA would be responsible for executing large-scale plans for flood control, irrigation, distribution of chemical fertilizers, and the introduction of the new “miracle rice” varieties being developed at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines. It would impact and transform the lives of millions of Vietnamese villagers. However, the reality of war, especially in the wake of the 1968 Tet Offensive, derailed the scheme, as safety in the countryside and the mass exodus and resettling of refugees made development work impossible.

The project died a slow death, capped by the North Vietnamese victory in 1975, and with it, Ekbladh suggests, so too did America’s faith in the modernization mission begin to crumble. The complicit involvement in the war of Lilienthal, Rostow, USAID, and various university programs and NGOs was a discreditable stain that led many to question the purpose of foreign aid policy and development more generally. Lilienthal’s Development and Resources Corporation was now seen as an agent of a

new form of imperialism. The TVA brand, along with other large-scale multipurpose programs, was harshly criticized as socially and environmentally disastrous. The broad consensus in favor of liberal statist modernization, both at home and abroad, that had been forged in the 1930s and 1940s was permanently fractured, ushering in a protracted state of crisis and impasse in development policy and thinking.

However, echoing Escobar and Scott, Ekbladh stresses the underlying continuity and lasting legacy of the American modernization mission, noting: “Undoubtedly, the period brought an end to a set of approaches and a discourse on the subject but not to a commitment to the idea . . . despite the upheaval, key institutions born of the consensus remained the primary executors of development internationally.”⁹⁶ Indeed, as the above synopsis indicates, Ekbladh makes the case for there being a continuation of U.S. policy approaches as well as a broadly conceived and adopted consensus on development “prevailing from roughly the 1930s through the 1970s.”⁹⁷ This was a consensus forged around the TVA, which Ekbladh sees as “a grand synecdoche, standing in for a wider liberal approach to economic and social development both domestically and internationally.”⁹⁸

Ekbladh’s claim that there existed a broad, unchanging consensus in support of a unitary, American model of development has been widely challenged by reviewers. “Are we really to believe,” writes Nils Gilman, “that the American missionaries, businesspeople, NGOs, international bureaucrats, policy intellectuals, government policymakers, and military officials—who, as *The Great American Mission* points out, all came to the idea of modernization with very different backgrounds and underlying motives—were in fact all animated by a shared vision of a globalized New Deal?”⁹⁹ Beneath the seeming coherence at the level of rhetoric and policy pronouncements, Gilman stresses the importance of disjunctures and conceptual shifts across historical periods, and the discrepancies between the TVA vision and the many variations and complexities of its “practical reception.” Brad Simpson echoes this sentiment, noting that “given its centrality to his analysis Ekbladh gives inadequate attention to the question of whether or not the TVA actually measured up to the flattering rhetoric of its many admirers.”¹⁰⁰ And this really goes to the heart of the problem. Although *The Great American Mission* purports to provide a global, synthetic account of the origins and nature of postwar American development discourse and practice, in the end—constrained and handicapped by its reliance on U.S.-based archival sources—it fails to deliver. It remains, as Simpson observes, an “avowedly U.S.-centric approach with its emphasis on what myriad commentators, foundation officers and American officials proposed and said.”¹⁰¹ Ultimately, as Corinna Unger points out, the book’s shortcomings are tied to its methodology: it is a book about the import of big ideas, and as such it conceives of development as predominantly a policy-based discourse. “Ekbladh is very successful in convincing readers that ideas matter,” Unger remarks, “but we do not receive much information on what happened when those ideas hit the ground . . . If we were to include the perspectives of those who actually experienced modernization projects, we might find that the path toward global American hegemony was more complicated.”¹⁰²

To be fair, Ekbladh’s book makes several innovative and significant contributions to the field, to which I will return in the second part of this essay. What I have sought

to highlight here are the aspects that his approach shares with much of the earlier scholarship of the 1990s. Indeed, the concerns raised by reviewers of *The Great American Mission* are strikingly reminiscent of those made of what I have billed as the first wave of writing the history of development.

III. Development from a Western and Elitist Perspective

One of the consequences of restricting one's field of vision to the level of discourse, as reviewers of Ekbladh's book are quick to point out, is a tendency to see development predominantly as a Western (especially American) invention. There is a heavy bias in much of the earlier historical literature toward examining development from a Western perspective, and especially through a U.S.-centered Cold War lens. The concern is largely with the intentions of political and social theorists, prominent statesmen, diplomats, experts, and policy makers and the doctrines they espoused. In other words, most of the early writings on the history of development tend to view the subject from above and from the center.

For postdevelopment critics such as Wolfgang Sachs and Arturo Escobar, for example, it is possible to speak of the fabrication of development in the late 1940s as a radical new strategy for dealing with the problems of what were termed the "underdeveloped areas." A number of factors coalesced at this historical juncture, including the founding of the United Nations in 1945, the consolidation of U.S. hegemony in the world economy through the Marshall Plan and the formation of the Bretton Woods system, and the onset of the Cold War and fear of international communism. The key symbolic moment came with President Truman's unveiling of the Point Four Program in his 1949 inauguration address.¹⁰³ Truman's Point Four, according to Gilbert Rist, constitutes the "opening act" that officially launched the "development age," introducing a new term, "underdevelopment," to describe the common condition of the inhabitants of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and in the process, transforming the meaning of development from an intransitive and spontaneously occurring phenomenon into a transitive act that could be willed to happen.¹⁰⁴ It was here, postdevelopment writers agree, that the professionalization and institutionalization of development first began, with the establishment of development studies programs, technical assistance missions, international organizations, and ever expanding networks of expertise.

These accounts see development as something devised by American and Western European policy makers and experts sometime between 1945 and 1955 and within a few years rapidly diffused throughout the newly independent nations of the Third World. The dynamic for change emanated from U.S. power elites, whose will it was to remake the world in their own image, based on their own country's historical experience as the model. One corollary of this view is to explain the intentions behind development in terms of U.S. strategic and economic interests. The offer of technical and financial assistance was invariably tied to the U.S.-led campaign to counteract communist influence in the newly emerging nations. As Escobar relates: "The cold war was undoubtedly one of the single most important factors at play in the conformation of the strategy of development. The historical roots of development and those of east-west politics lie in one and the same process: the political rearrangements that

occurred after World War II. In the late 1940s, the real struggle between east and west had already moved to the Third World, and development became the grand strategy for advancing such rivalry and, at the same time, the designs of industrial civilization. The confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union thus lent legitimacy to the enterprise of modernization and development; to extend the sphere of political and cultural influence became an end in itself."¹⁰⁵

Postdevelopment critics were not the only scholars to suggest that development was invented in the immediate postwar years. David B. Moore, for example, also chose to mark the year 1945 as the beginning of the "modern age" of the development project because it was after the end of World War II that the United States began to give serious consideration to the Third World and its relationship to the new discourse of political and economic development.¹⁰⁶ As he notes: "In the wake of the Marshall Plan, the Soviet-Stalinist model of industrialization, the Cold War, the Chinese revolution, and the emergence of the politically independent 'third world,' western policy-makers—led by the United States—had quite a number of problems facing them as they considered how to deal with the former colonial subjects. The word 'development' was the perfect hegemonic catch-all for capturing the goals and aspirations of all parties to the situation. Its basic elements were constructed in the years between 1945 and 1955."¹⁰⁷

With the exception of one or two scholars such as Ekbladh, historians of U.S. foreign relations interested in examining the history of modernization as an ideological and cultural force have been particularly drawn to the idea of development as a post-1945, Cold War doctrine.¹⁰⁸ For many the correlation between modernization and the Cold War seems obvious. Michael Latham, for example, while acknowledging that modernization drew on Enlightenment models and imperial ideals, begins his study in 1961 at the height of the Cold War and sees the Cold War context as the essential political setting which led to the theory's genesis.¹⁰⁹ Nils Gilman echoes this view. Although he sees important intellectual affinities with earlier European intellectual traditions, especially the Enlightenment's view of progress as a human-guided, universal phenomenon, Gilman nevertheless maintains that modernization theory was a uniquely American creation conceived in response to the unprecedented challenges and opportunities that faced U.S. policy makers and social scientists in the early postwar years. Analysts and theorists drew on American discourses of national identity forming at the same time, and they strove consciously to break with the past by deliberately disregarding European colonial antecedents and knowledge, looking instead to homegrown solutions such as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the European Economic Recovery Program as models and prototypes.¹¹⁰

Seeing development through the "Cold War lens," as Matthew Connelly puts it, is in part a reflection of the type of historical actors whose vantage point historians choose to privilege and articulate.¹¹¹ And this brings me to my final point about the way the fixation on discourse and the importance of ideas determined the contours of the field in its initial stages. That is, most studies initially concentrated not just on Western models of development but on analyzing the viewpoints of Western political and intellectual elites. In a way, this made perfect sense. If one situates both the source of continuity and innovation in development discourses as located within dominant

international organizations and government institutions, then one's focus will tend to be on the center or metropole, and by extension, on metropolitan archives and actors, and on the authoritative statements they produce in policy documents, official memoranda, project reports, and various other texts. In other words, if one focuses on the power of the West, then one will naturally focus on its "hegemonic texts" and on the prominent statesmen, policy makers, and academics who were associated with the most iconic theories and doctrines of the time, because this is what actually happens in the metropole.¹¹²

Both Latham and Gilman, for example, focus on the perceptions and attitudes (and the personal papers and archives) of U.S. high officials, policy makers, prominent experts, and social scientists. In Latham's case the concern is more with the key players within the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and the programs they helped to devise and implement. For Gilman, the spotlight is much more on the leading intellectual figures within the American social scientific community of the 1950s and 1960s, including Talcott Parsons, Edward Shills, Gabriel Almond, Lucien Pye, and Walter Rostow, among many others. While more ambivalent about the question of agency, postdevelopment scholars such as Esteva and Escobar also tend to assign blame for the "development regime" on Western-, and especially U.S.-, based or trained policy elites and technocrats, variously referred to as "planners," "experts," "developers," "elites," "economists," "Western promoters," and so on.¹¹³ Escobar sees the pioneers of development economics such as Rostow and Ragnald Nurkse, with their penchant for model building, as well as the World Bank with its missions of foreign experts, as particularly instrumental in constructing the object and "discursive space" of development.¹¹⁴

Conclusions

I began this exposition with the observation that development studies has long maintained a dialogical conversation with history, but it was only in the wake of the global debt crisis, the demise of the developmentalist state, the end of the Cold War, and above all the rise of neoliberalism that the historicization of development was itself constituted as a field of critical inquiry and examination. A plethora of books and articles in the 1990s—many inspired by poststructuralist analysis and neopopulist sentiments—fixed on the idea of development as a hegemonic discourse of Western design. Important and productive insights were revealed, not the least of which was a greater understanding of the politics and of the intimate relationship between power and knowledge within international efforts for promoting development.

But if most analysts in the 1990s viewed development from the perspective of Western (especially American) policymaking elites and saw it in terms of Cold War dynamics, there were some who dissented from this general disposition. Perhaps the most significant opposition came from Africanist historians, who approached the history of development from the vantage point of the political economy of colonialism. In different ways, the scholarship of Michael Cowen and Robert Shenton on the one hand, and Frederick Cooper on the other, made the case for moving past the post-1945 "age of development" consensus by examining both the earlier roots and deeper complexities of development's history. By way of closing Part I of this extended

essay, then, it might be useful to conclude with a comparison of a set of transitional texts written by Cowen and Shenton and Cooper in the mid-1990s. Though they chronologically fall within the first wave of development histories, they anticipate many of the key programmatic themes of more recent literature. Their work, thus, stands as a necessary bridge to cross to reach the post-9/11 phase of development historiography that the sequel to this essay takes up.

Cowen and Shenton's academic partnership began with their shared interest in the history of Fabian colonialism in Africa, which reached its high water mark with the postwar Labour government's colonial development offensive in response to the 1947 sterling crisis. They came to realize, however, "that the conceptual roots of the intention to develop had to be understood before we could give an account of the historical practice of development in Africa. Development practice in Africa could not be separated from what was purported to be development in Britain itself."¹¹⁵ The result of their intellectual detour was a series of related articles and a densely written but nevertheless pathbreaking study entitled, simply, *Doctrines of Development*. Their research situates the genesis and invention of development not in 1949 with President Truman, but in nineteenth-century Western Europe.¹¹⁶ This nineteenth-century conception of development, according to Cowen and Shenton, can be followed through various iterations: from the question of how to govern India under the British Raj, to the national ideal of development in Australia and Canada in the mid-nineteenth century, to the *fin-de-siècle* imperial ambitions of Joseph Chamberlain as a way of resolving "underdevelopment" in Britain itself, to the negation of Chamberlainite development in Africa (in the form of the failed Fabian colonial offensive of 1947–50) and its replacement in Kenya by the postwar practice of agrarian development as a way of alleviating unemployment caused by surplus population.

The work of Frederick Cooper also challenged the primacy of the Cold War genesis of ideas about development and modernization. Instead of Truman's Point Four, Cooper finds the source of many contemporary development policies and projects in the planning and interventionist practices introduced by various colonial states in the 1930s and 1940s. In an extensive study of the labor question in late colonial Africa, as well as in an influential edited collection produced with Randall Packard, Cooper makes the case for linking the crises of late colonialism with the emergence of development as a global project.¹¹⁷ According to Cooper and Packard, "The form of the development idea that captured the imagination of many people across the world from the 1940s onward had quite specific origins—in the crisis of colonial empires . . . What was new in the colonial world of the late 1930s and 1940s was that the concept of development became a framing device bringing together a range of interventionist policies and metropolitan finance with the explicit goal of raising colonial standards of living."¹¹⁸

More than any other scholar, Cooper has been instrumental in drawing attention to the colonial roots of postwar development thinking. At the same time, Cooper's main concern has been to locate the development initiative in the imperial crisis of the 1930s and 1940s, and as such he pays only passing attention to comparable crises and debates that transpired earlier. For Cowen and Shenton, on the other hand, the 1940s development concept was not the beginning but rather the crest of a much older

and multilayered debate. As noted above, they contend that this more extensive intellectual genealogy needs to be delineated if the reasons behind the current impasse in development are to be understood. Unlike most scholars who routinely trace the conceptual heritage of development back to the Enlightenment's belief in infinite progress or improvement, Cowen and Shenton suggest instead that the starting point for the modern intention to develop is more accurately found in the *reaction to* Enlightenment. They insist that the idea of development as a means by which the state could impose order on society emerged first in Europe in the early nineteenth-century, not as the equivalent of progress but "as the counterpoint to progress . . . based upon the idea that 'development' may be used to ameliorate the disordered faults of progress."¹¹⁹

Despite their different starting points, Cooper agrees with Cowen and Shenton that development discourse was conceived in response to real-life material contradictions and crises, and should not be dismissed as a *sui generis* or idealist fabrication. For Cooper, it is the crises of the Great Depression, followed by World War II, that form the key political-economic context. The depression of the 1930s had a profound impact on the colonial world, much of which was made up of primary commodity producing regions. The collapse of exports triggered a sharp fall in overall wage employment and rates, resulting in a dramatic decline in real incomes and living standards for colonial wage-earners as the cost of food, imported goods, and urban rents rose sharply. World War II exacerbated the situation, generating new pressures for the mobilization of colonial resources that drastically reduced local consumption thanks to higher taxes and cut imports. Social unrest in the form of strikes, riots and disturbances erupted throughout the colonies in the wake of the depression, and continued to spread in waves across the vital ports and communication centers of empire during the war.¹²⁰

These crises marked a critical stage in the colonial encounter, setting off a far-reaching process of official introspection and restructuring. Significantly, Cooper argues, both French and British governments confronted the upsurge of strikes and riots in the colonies not as a "labor problem" directly, but rather as a quandary of technical planning. British colonial officials and experts in particular attempted to assert control over the "labor question" by subsuming it under the framework of development and welfare. "Centralisation," Cooper observes, "was justified in the name of British scientific knowledge and the need for coordination rather than by the opposition of class interests."¹²¹ The decisive breakthrough in the development idea, according to Cooper, came with the passing of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. For the first time, officials at the Colonial Office recognized the need for subventions of imperial funding not only to build infrastructure and boost production but also to provide social services and to elevate the standards of living of colonial subjects. For France, the 1940s also brought about a symbolic, though less decisive, break with past policies. In 1946 it created the *Fonds d'investissement pour le développement économique et social* (FIDES), which provided matching metropolitan funding to colonial states to undertake programs of social and economic development. What Cooper demonstrates most clearly is that development as official doctrine was adopted by Imperial Britain and France prior to President Truman's embrace of the idea in

1949. What is more, it was taken up with the intent of forestalling popular discontent and thus providing European colonial rule a new lease on life and legitimacy, not for the sake of a Cold War-inspired, anticommunist alternative to imperialism.

Crisis also lies at the heart of Cowen and Shenton's analysis, only in their case it is the economic crises and social turmoil that gripped early industrial England and France that form the essential backdrop. The turmoil and disorder of early industrialization appeared to confirm Malthus's pessimism that surplus population would lead to scarcity, and in turn, unemployment and immiseration of the poor. It was here, amidst the fear of revolution and anarchy springing from the crisis of surplus population and growing popular discontent that, Cowen and Shenton contend, the idea of development was born. Beginning with the Saint-Simonians and Auguste Comte in France, and adapted by J.S. Mill in England, an idea of development was formulated that attempted to reconcile progress with order. Central to this was the principle of "trusteeship" as the political means of "development." Only if those who understood the laws of social order and who possessed the scientific knowledge of how to make progress orderly were able to act as "trustees" for humanity would the application of positivist science be realised and the improvement of progress follow.¹²² When the idea of intentional development is linked to the agency of the state and forms the basis of state policy, Cowen and Shenton surmise, it becomes a "doctrine of development."

Much more could be written about this richly complex book, a substantial part of which is taken up with examining various manifestations of development doctrine. Despite their contrarian positioning, however, there is a sense in which Cowen and Shenton's work remains very much a product of the time in which it was written, and thus open to many of the same criticisms made of the first phase of development historiography. Its frame of reference remains firmly fixed on the metropolitan center and on a European intellectual ambiance. Development for Cowen and Shenton is a quintessentially and unapologetically Eurocentric conception. It is also—by its very nature as a Eurocentric idea—depicted by Cowen and Shenton as something conceived by and for intellectual and political elites.

But despite their constricted lens, Cowen and Shenton's book should nonetheless be credited for anticipating some of the pivotal thematic concerns of more recent historical writing on development. Like Cooper's more focused investigation of late colonialism in Africa, their thick empirical description and theoretical "genealogy" of the European origins of state-led development practices challenged the widely accepted view at the time that development was the invention of a post-1945 American world order designed primarily with the imperatives of the Cold War in mind. Taken together, the work of Cowen and Shenton and Cooper opened up the possibility of a much more firmly rooted and deeply complex history of development, one that would examine not just the European backdrop but also the colonial antecedents and after-lives of many postwar development policies. It is these themes of a "longer" and "deeper" (as well as a more broadly conceived) history of development that have come to mark the field over the last decade or so. It is these themes that form the subject of

the second part of this essay, the bulk of which is devoted to analysing the historiographical moves that followed in the wake of the the dramatic events of September 11, 2001.

NOTES

I would like to thank Nils Gilman for commissioning this essay and assisting with its gestation, and two external reviewers for their comments.

1. Wolfgang Sachs, "Introduction," in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (London: Zed Books, 1992), 1.

2. Frederick Cooper, "Writing the History of Development," *Journal of Modern European History* 8, no. 1 (2010): 5–23; Corinna Unger, "Histories of Development and Modernization: Findings, Reflections, Future Research," in *H-Soz-u-Kult*, September 12, 2010, accessed June 21, 2015, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2010-12-001>; Marc Frey and Sönke Kunkel, "Writing the History of Development: A Review of Recent Literature," *Contemporary European History* 20, no. 2 (May 2011): 215–32; Daniel Immerwahr, "Modernization and Development in U.S. Foreign Relations," *Passport: The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations Review* 43, no. 2 (2012): 22–25.

3. Nick Cullather, "Development? It's History," *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2000): 462.

4. Colin Leys, *Rise and Fall of Development Theory* (London: James Murray, 1996), 25.

5. Robert Bates, "Lessons from History, or the Perfidy of English Exceptionalism and the Significance of Historical France," *World Politics* 40, no. 4 (July 1988): 499.

6. W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960). In many ways, Rostow's entire academic agenda can be viewed as an exercise in applying economic theory to economic history. As an undergraduate, Rostow majored in history at Yale before attending Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. He wrote his doctoral thesis on British trade fluctuations in the nineteenth century, and he returned to England several times, first as a professor of American history at Oxford, 1946–47, and Cambridge, 1949–50, and then again on a year's sabbatical to Cambridge in 1958 where he lectured on the process of industrialization. From 1950 until 1961, Rostow was a professor of economic history, as well as a member of the Center for International Studies (CENIS), at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. See Walt Whitman Rostow, "Development: The Political Economy of the Marshallian Long Period," in *Pioneers in Development*, ed. Gerald M. Meier and Dudley Seers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 229–61.

7. This is especially true for critics of Rostovian modernization theory such as Paul Baran, Alexander Gerschenkron, Andre Gunder Frank, and Walter Rodney, to name just a few, who criticized the basic assumption that there exists a single, linear pattern of economic growth through which all societies progress and can be classified according to their position on the historical spectrum. See Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957), and *The Longer View: Essays toward a Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969); Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil* (New York:

Monthly Review Press, 1967); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1972).

8. Rob Jenkins, "Where Development Meets History," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 44, no. 1 (March 2006): 10–13.

9. M. Kenny and D. Williams, "What Do We Know about Economic Growth? Or, Why Don't We Know Very Much?," *World Development* 29, no. 1 (2001): 1–22; Michael Woolcock, Simon Szreter, and Vijayendra Rao, "How and Why Does History Matter for Development Policy?," Brooks World Poverty Institute Working Paper 68, University of Manchester, 2009.

10. Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James R. Robinson, "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation," *American Economic Review* 91, no. 5 (December 2001): 1369–401.

11. See, for example, David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415–1980* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000); Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2005); Gita Subrahmanyam, "Ruling Continuities: Colonial Rule, Social Forces and Path Dependence in British India and Africa," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 44, no. 1 (March 2006): 84–117; Matthew Lange, *Legacies of Despotism and Development: British Colonialism and State Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

12. Cullather, "Development? It's History," 642.

13. Robert Nisbet, *Social Change and History: Aspects of the Western Theory of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), and *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

14. See H. W. Arndt, "Development Economics before 1945," in *Development and Planning: Essays in Honor of Paul N. Rosenstein-Rodan*, ed. Jagdish Bhagwati and Richard S. Eckaus (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), 13–29; Arndt, "Economic Development: A Semantic History," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 29, no. 3 (April 1981): 457–66; Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Another early historical survey of development economics, written around the same time as Arndt's and Hirschman's, was Paul Streeten, "Development Ideas in Historical Perspective," in *Toward a New Strategy for Development*, Rothko Chapel Colloquium (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), 21–52.

15. Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977); Hirschman, "The Rise and Decline of Development Economics," in Albert O. Hirschman, *Essays in Trespassing: Economics to Politics and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1–24.

16. Albert O. Hirschman, "A Dissenter's Confession: 'The Strategy of Economic Development' Revisited," in *Pioneers in Development*, ed. Gerald M. Meier and Dudley Seers (New York: Oxford University Press/ IBRD, 1984), 96–98.

17. Another important contribution, published around the same time as Hirschman's and Arndt's work, was the World Bank–sponsored retrospective of ten pioneer development economists who wrote many of the central books, articles, and official reports that shaped the field during the formative period of the late 1940s and 1950s. In addition to Hirschman, noted above, the "pioneers" included in the volume are P. T. Bauer, Colin Clark, W. Arthur Lewis, Gunnar Myrdal, Raúl Prebisch, Paul N. Rosenstein-Rodan, Walt Whitman Rostow, H.W. Singer, and Jan Tinbergen. See Gerald M. Meier and Dudley Seers, eds. *Pioneers in Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

18. Robert A. Packenham, *Liberal America and the Third World: Political Development Ideas in Foreign Aid and Social Science* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973); Irene L. Gendzier, *Managing Political Change: Social Scientists and the Third World* (London: Westview Press, 1985).
19. Packenham, *Liberal America and the Third World*, 6.
20. *Ibid.*, 111–60.
21. Gendzier, *Managing Political Change*, 49.
22. *Ibid.*, 3–4.
23. Arndt, *Economic Development*, 177.
24. Email correspondence with Nils Gilman, September 14, 2012. The metaphor, of course, is taken from the nineteenth-century German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel, who famously wrote, “The owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk,” by which he meant that philosophy only comes to understand a historical epoch in hindsight, after it has passed.
25. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).
26. Eric Helleiner, “From Bretton Woods to Global Finance: A World Turned Upside Down,” in *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*, ed. Richard Stubbs and Geoffrey R. D. Underhill (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994), 163–75.
27. The major exceptions to this trend were the Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) of Southeast Asia (Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong), which together accounted for almost half of all Third World exports of manufactures between 1980 and 1992, and China and India, who also grew faster in the 1980s. See P.W. Preston, *Development Theory: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), chaps. 13 and 14.
28. Helleiner, “From Bretton Woods to Global Finance,” 170.
29. Michael P. Todaro and Stephen C. Smith, *Economic Development*, 8th ed. (Boston, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 2002), 128–32. See, for example, Ian Little, *Economic Development: Theories, Policies, and International Relations* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); Deepak Lal, *The Poverty of Development Economics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985); Polly Hill, *Development Economics on Trial: The Anthropological Case for a Prosecution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
30. P. T. Bauer, *Equality, the Third World and Economic Delusion* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), chap. 5. See also P. T. Bauer, *Dissent on Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); Bauer, *Reality and Rhetoric: Studies in the Economics of Development* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984).
31. Christopher Colclough and James Manor, eds., *States or Markets? Neo-Liberalism and the Development Policy Debate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
32. John Toye, *Dilemmas of Development: Reflections on the Counter-Revolution in Development Economics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).
33. See, for example, Douglas North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981); Jon Elster, ed., *Rational Choice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Robert Bates, ed., *Toward a Political Economy of Development: A Rational Choice Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Bates, *Beyond the Miracle of the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Bates, “Social Dilemmas and Rational Individuals: An Assessment of the New Institutionalism,” in *The New Institutional Economics and Third World Development*, ed. John Hariss et al. (London: Routledge, 1995); Pranab Bardhan, ed., *The Economic Theory of Agrarian Institutions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

34. Leys, *Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, 25–26. See also Gavin Williams, “Modernizing Malthus: The World Bank, Population Control, and the African Environment,” in *The Power of Development* ed. Jonathan Crush (New York: Routledge, 1995), 170.

35. See, for example, Frans J. Schuurman, ed., *Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in Development Theory* (London: Zed Books, 1993); Norman Long, “From Paradigm Lost to Paradigm Regained? The Case for an Actor-Oriented Sociology of Development,” in *Battlefields of Knowledge: The Interlocking of Theory and Practice in Social Research and Development*, ed. Norman and Ann Long (New York: Routledge, 1994), 16–46; M. J. Griesgraber and B. G. Gunter, eds., *Development: New Paradigms and Principles for the 21st Century* (London: Pluto, 1996); Ronald Munck and Denis O’Hearn, eds., *Critical Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

36. Leys, *Rise and Fall of Development Theory*, 23–24. See also Michael Watts, “‘A New Deal in Emotions’: Theory and Practice and the Crisis of Development,” in Crush, ed., *Power of Development*, 58.

37. For some of the most important works of the postdevelopment genre, see Claude Alvares, *Science, Development and Violence: The Revolt against Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995); Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash, “Beyond Development, What?,” *Development in Practice* 8, no. 3 (August 1998): 280–96; Ashis Nandy, ed., *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (London: Zed Books, 1997); Sachs, *The Development Dictionary*; Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1988).

38. Rajni Kothari, *Rethinking Development: In Search of Humane Alternatives* (Delhi: Ajanta, 1988); F. Appfel Marglin and S. A. Marglin, eds., *Dominating Knowledge: Development, Culture, and Resistance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Sachs, *The Development Dictionary*; Richard Norgaard, *Development Betrayed: The End of Progress and a Coevolutionary Revisioning of the Future* (London: Routledge 1994); Arturo Escobar, “Imagining a Post-Development Era,” in Crush, ed., *Power of Development*, 211–27; Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree, *Post-Development Reader* (London: Zed, 1997).

39. See, for example, Arun Agrawal, “Poststructuralist Approaches to Development: Some Critical Reflections,” *Peace & Change* 21, no. 4 (October 1996): 464–77.

40. Watts, “‘A New Deal in Emotions,’” 47.

41. See Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 3–4; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “My Paradigm or Yours? Alternative Development, Post-Development, Reflexive Development,” *Development and Change* 29, no. 2 (April 1998): 343–73; Ray Kiely, “The Last Refuge of the Noble Savage? A Critical Assessment of Post-Development Theory,” *European Journal of Development Research* 11, no. 1 (June 1999): 30–55; Michael Watts, “Development at the Millennium: Malthus, Marx and the Politics of Alternatives,” *Geographische Zeitschrift* 88, no. 2 (2000): 67–93.

42. Pieterse, “My Paradigm or Yours?” 364.

43. Watts, “‘A New Deal in Emotions,’” 45.

44. Tom Brass, “The Agrarian Myth, the ‘New’ Populism and the ‘New Right,’” *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 25–31, 1997; Brass, *Peasants, Populism and Postmodernism: The Return*

of the *Agrarian Myth* (London: Frank Cass, 2000); Brass, “Scott’s ‘Zomia,’ or a Populist Post-modern History of Nowhere,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 42, no. 1 (2012): 123–33.

45. My position is similar to that of Stuart Hall, who has described, with penetrating insight, the political history of Britain since the 1970s as the “neoliberal revolution.” “Each crisis since the 1970s,” Hall explains, “has looked different, arising from specific historical circumstances. However, taken together, they seem to share some consistent underlying features. . . . Paradoxically, opposed political regimes all contributed in different ways to expanding this project.” See Stuart Hall, “The Neo-Liberal Revolution,” *Soundings* 48 (Summer 2011): 9–10.

46. James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

47. See Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, xiv–xvi.

48. See, for example, Arturo Escobar, “Discourse and Power in Development: Michel Foucault and the Relevance of his Work to the Third World,” *Alternatives* 10, no. 3 (1984): 377–400; Escobar, *Encountering Development*.

49. One of the main differences between Ferguson and Escobar is how they see development arising. For Ferguson, specific ideas about development are generated in practice and their primary goal is to neutralize poverty by depoliticizing it. In contrast, for Escobar, development is first conceived in the minds of policymakers in Washington or London and then later imposed, top down, on the Third World. In Escobar’s view, poverty is a myth. It does not exist prior to this moment but is invented as an object of intervention by the West.

50. Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine*, 256.

51. In terms of postcolonial theory and postdevelopment studies, some of the most influential works by Foucault include *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1972); *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); and “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87–104.

52. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 3. See also Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); and Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

53. The term “imaginary of development” is taken from Jonathan Crush. See Crush, “Introduction: Imagining Development,” in Crush, ed., *Power of Development*, 7.

54. Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (London: Zed Books, 1997); Crush, ed., *Power of Development*.

55. The influence of postcolonial studies scholars such as Dipesh Chakrabarty is quite evident here. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for ‘Indian’ Pasts?,” *Representations* 37 (Winter 1992): 1–26; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). Provincializing or demythologizing development by exposing it as a Eurocentric discourse is an idea that runs throughout the critical literature of the 1990s. See, for example, Ozay Mehmet, *Westernizing the Third World: The Eurocentricity of Economic Development Theories* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Vincent Tucker, “The Myth of Development: A Critique of a Eurocentric Discourse,” in *Critical Development Theory*, 1–26.

56. Rist, *The History of Development*, 4.

57. In this respect, Rist’s work is not all that different from earlier studies by Nisbet and

Arndt, who also surveyed the key ideas and moments in Western thinking about progress and development. Escobar's approach is more theoretical, and his periodization is far more truncated, but he too conceptualizes development "as a chapter of what can be called an anthropology of modernity, that is, a general investigation of Western modernity as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon." See Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 11.

58. Crush, "Introduction: Imagining Development," in Crush, ed., *Power of Development*, 5.

59. *Ibid.*, 9.

60. "One of the principal ways practitioners, bureaucrats, and policy makers articulate and make sense of [development's] uncertainty is to tell stories or scenarios that simplify the ambiguity . . . broad explanatory narratives that can be operationalized into standard approaches with widespread application." See Emery Roe, "Development Narratives, or Making the Best of Blueprint Development," *World Development* 19, no. 4 (April 1991): 288.

61. Timothy Mitchell, "The Object of Development: America's Egypt," in Crush, ed., *Power of Development*, 130.

62. Watts, "'A New Deal in Emotions,'" 46–47. For Marx's view on capitalist transformation and modernity, see Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

63. Cullather, "Development? It's History," 642.

64. Daniel Immerwahr makes a similar argument, describing the decade or so following Michael Latham's *Modernization as Ideology* "as marking the first wave of writing on U.S. development." See Immerwahr, "Modernization and Development in U.S. Foreign Relations," 23.

65. Michael Latham's *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

66. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 5.

67. Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 3.

68. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 15–16; Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 8, 28, 30.

69. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 13–17.

70. *Ibid.*, 67.

71. Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 16.

72. *Ibid.*, 4.

73. *Ibid.*, 16–17.

74. To give just a sampling, we might mention Alberto Arce and Norman Long, who have raised the importance of multiple modernities, countertendencies, and the appropriation, "fragmentation and dispersal of modernity into constantly proliferating modernities." Suzanne Bergeron has also highlighted the fragmentary nature of development and is one of the few scholars to integrate gender into her analytical framework. Benjamin Zacharia has provided us with a fascinating account of nationalist debates surrounding notions of development in India in the late colonial period. These are all worthwhile investigations that have enriched our understanding of development. Yet all of these authors continue to define and examine development primarily on the level of ideas, concepts, texts, etc. See Alberto Arce and Norman Long, "Reconfiguring Modernity and Development from an Anthropological Perspective," in *Anthropology, Development, Modernities: Exploring Discourse, Counter-Tendencies and Violence*, ed. Alberto Arce and Norman Long (London: Routledge, 2000); Suzanne Bergeron, *Fragments of Development: Nation, Gender,*

and the Space of Modernity (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Benjamin Zacharia, *Developing India: An Intellectual and Social History, c. 1930–50* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

75. Most of those whose work falls within the poststructuralist rubric hold similar views to Escobar's. See, for example, Alvares, *Science, Development and Violence*; Kothari, *Rethinking Development*; Sachs, *The Development Dictionary*; Shiva, *Staying Alive*.

76. It also requires, according to Scott, a poorly defined or severely constrained civil society that is unable to effectively resist the designs of the state to exert its will. See Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 88–89.

77. Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 41.

78. Tana Murray Li, for example, argues that the concept of conspiracy is implicit in Escobar's critique of development. See Tana Murray Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 287, n. 22. Also see Arun Agrawal, "Poststructuralist Approaches to Development: Some Critical Reflections," *Peace and Change* 21, no. 4 (October 1996): 464–77.

79. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4–5, 88–90.

80. *Ibid.*, 6.

81. Michael Lipton, *Why Poor People Stay Poor: Urban Bias in World Development* (London: Temple Smith, 1977); Robert Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* (Harlow: Longman, 1983); Paul Richards, *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution: Ecology and Food Production in West Africa* (London: Hutchinson, 1985).

82. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 262–306.

83. Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 17.

84. If anything, this theme has become even more pronounced in Scott's more recent writing. See James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Southeast Asia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009). For a scathing critique of the book, see Tom Brass, "Review Article: Scott's 'Zomia,' or a Populist Post-modern History of Nowhere," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 42, no. 1 (February 2012): 123–33.

85. Agrawal, "Poststructuralist Approaches to Development," 476.

86. See Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 42.

87. Mark B. Tauger, "The Moral Agronomy of the Peasant v. the Moral Economy of the Town," review of James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State*, H-Net Reviews, April 1999.

88. See Brass, "Scott's 'Zomia,' or a Populist Post-modern History of Nowhere," 126.

89. Agrawal, "Poststructuralist Approaches to Development," 475.

90. Dane Kennedy, "Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24, no. 3 (September 1996): 353. A similar critique is made by Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard. See Cooper and Packard, "Introduction," in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 10.

91. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 186–87.

92. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, viii–ix.

93. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 6.

94. David Ekbladh, *Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010).

95. Ibid., 71.
96. Ibid., 255–56.
97. Ibid., 7.
98. Ibid., 8.
99. Nils Gilman, review of David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission*, H-Diplo Roundtable Review 11, no. 35 (2010): 9, accessed July 21, 2015, <http://h-Diplo.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XI-35.pdf>.
100. Brad Simpson, review of Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission*, H-Diplo Roundtable Review 11, no. 35 (2010): 15.
101. Ibid., 18.
102. Corinna R. Unger, review of Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission*, H-Diplo Roundtable Review 11, no. 35 (2010): 25.
103. Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 31–39. Wolfgang Sachs's position is almost identical to Escobar's: "We propose to call the age of development that particular historical period which began on January 20, 1949, when Harry S. Truman for the first time declared, in his inauguration speech, the Southern Hemisphere as 'underdeveloped areas.' The label stuck and subsequently provided the cognitive base for both arrogant interventionism from the North and pathetic self-pity in the South." See Sachs, "Introduction," in *The Development Dictionary*, 2.
104. Rist, *The History of Development*, 72–73.
105. Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 33–34.
106. David B. Moore, "Development Discourse as Hegemony: Towards an Ideological History, 1945–1995," in *Debating Development Discourse: Institutional and Popular Perspectives*, ed. David B. Moore and Gerald G. Schmitz (London: Macmillan, 1995). Another example is Philip McMichael's *Development and Social Change*, in which he writes: "The proclamation by President Truman divided the world discursively between those who were modern and 'developed,' and those who were not. Modern became the standard against which other societies were judged. This was a new way of looking at the world. It assumed that with the end of colonialism the 'underdeveloped' world had only to follow the example of the 'modern' world. This new paradigm produced a strategy for improving the condition of the Third World. It is the premise for what we shall call the *development project*." See Philip McMichael, *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective* (Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Pine Forge Press, 1996), 24.
107. Moore, "Development Discourse as Hegemony," 22.
108. Another historian who has written on the deeper origins of American modernization ideas and practices is Michael Adas. See Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), 402–18; Adas, "Modernization Theory and the American Revival of the Scientific and Technological Standards of Social Achievement and Human Worth," in *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War*, ed. David C. Engerman et al. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 25–46.
109. See Latham, *Modernization as Ideology*, 1–5, 23–30.
110. Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future*, 16, 34, 38–39.
111. Matthew Connelly, "Taking Off the Cold War Lens: Visions of North-South Conflict during the Algerian War of Independence," *American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (June 2000): 739–69.
112. Correspondence with Nils Gilman, September 14, 2012.

113. See Esteva, “Development,” and Escobar, “Planning,” in *The Development Dictionary*, 6–25; 132–45. The ambivalence toward and neglect of the agency behind discourse is a common weakness of poststructuralist approaches in general and is rooted in Foucault’s conception of power as grid-like ubiquitous and all encompassing. See Kiely, “The Last Refuge of the Noble Savage?,” 36–37.

114. As Escobar writes: “The development economist played a special role in this new universe of discourse. To him (he was almost invariably a male) belonged the expertise that was most avidly sought; it was he who knew what was needed, he who decided on the most efficient way to allocate scarce resources, he who presided over the table at which—as if they were his personal entourage—demographers, educators, urban planners, nutritionists, agricultural experts, and so many other development practitioners sat in order to mend the world . . . The system as a whole rested on the economist’s shoulders.” See Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 85.

115. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, x.

116. Ibid. See also M.P. Cowen and R.W. Shenton, “The Origin and Course of Fabian Colonialism in Africa,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 4, no. 2 (June 1991): 143–74; Cowen and Shenton, “The Invention of Development,” in Crush, ed., *Power of Development*, 27–43; Cowen and Shenton, “Agrarian Doctrines of Development: Part I,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 25, no. 2 (January 1998): 49–76; Cowen and Shenton, “Agrarian Doctrines of Development: Part II,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 25, no. 3 (April 1998): 31–62.

117. Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Cooper, “Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans, and the Development Concept,” in *International Development and the Social Sciences*, ed. Cooper and Packard, 64–92.

118. Cooper and Packard, “Introduction,” in *International Development and the Social Sciences*, ed. Cooper and Packard, 7.

119. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, 7.

120. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, chap. 4.

121. Ibid., 68–69.

122. Cowen and Shenton, *Doctrines of Development*, 34–35.