

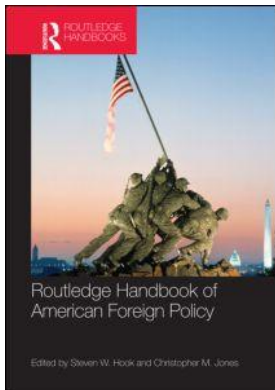
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Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Routledge Handbook of American Foreign Policy

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Critical Theories

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203878637.ch7>

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Published online on: 31 Aug 2011

How to cite :- Howard J. Wiarda, Ann P. Kryzanek. 31 Aug 2011, *Critical Theories from:* Routledge Handbook of American Foreign Policy Routledge

Accessed on: 03 Oct 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203878637.ch7>

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Critical Theories

Howard J. Wiarda and Ann P. Kryzanek

In order to grasp American foreign policy, one must understand the theoretical perspectives that undergird it. Critical theories are an important part of our theoretical history, offering a paradigm with which we can understand U.S. policy across the globe. These theories include, but are not limited to, such approaches as Marxism, dependency theory, and world systems analysis. Their applications to comparative politics and international relations are somewhat unique in that they not only offer a distinct theoretical perspective but also an ideological framework and a prescription for policy.

Critical approaches grew out of orthodox Marxist theories, which assume that international conflict can be attributed to capitalism and the persistent quest for profit among states in the system. Dependency theory focuses on the relations between industrial capitalist states and less-developed nations, the latter of which were presumed to be dependencies of the former. According to this theory, the prosperity of the developed world came at the expense of underdevelopment in the “Third World” (a Cold War term used to differentiate developing countries from capitalist [First World] and communist [Second World] states). World systems analysis took a similar approach, conceiving of the international market as a social system comprised of a set of mechanisms that redistributes resources from “peripheral” to “core” states. These critical theories offered an alternative to realist and liberal theories of international relations by putting forth a different explanation of international conflict and foreign policy behavior than these more mainstream theories. Critical approaches also diverge from constructivist theory, although the latter frequently adopts a critical stance toward political and economic elites and the rhetorical means they choose to achieve their foreign policy preferences.

The neo-Marxist perspectives are closely related to the study of Latin America and its historic relationship with Washington. In fact, many of these theories, having been formulated among intellectuals attempting to grasp the relationship between development on the continent and American foreign policy, grew out of Latin America. From there, the theories traveled to Africa and southern Asia. This chapter will examine this distinct research tradition—its origins, evolution, and current status in the discipline of political science and in policy-making arenas. Although critical theories are less prominent today than in decades past, their focus on economic inequalities between North and South and the associated political disparities make them useful and relevant paradigms in understanding American foreign policy toward the developing world.

Origin of Critical Theories

The origins of these radical approaches may be traced back to the imperialist theories of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, and Rosa Luxemburg. However, contemporary neo-Marxist models have their origin in the work of Raúl Prebisch, an Argentine economist working for the United Nations Commission on Latin America (UNCLA). In his well-known thesis, Prebisch (1950) observed that the terms of trade for developing countries relative to advanced industrial states had declined over time. Essentially, because developing nations were exporting inexpensive commodities they were able to purchase fewer and fewer manufactured goods from developed countries for a given quantity of their exports. It was Prebisch who advocated that underdeveloped states employ protectionist trade policies, which would allow these countries to pursue a self-sufficient development path. Such an idea became the basis for the Import Substitution Industrialization model of development, pursued by such nations as Argentina, Brazil, and to a lesser extent, Chile in the latter half of the twentieth century. Captured by Prebisch's thesis and policy directives, a generation of scholars sought to develop an explicitly structuralist theory of dependency that would explain the continued underdevelopment of the Third World.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory cannot be characterized as one unified model, but rather as a body of social science theories with a wide range of perspectives. One strand of dependency theory developed among American neo-Marxist scholars, typified by the works of Paul Baran and, most notably, Andre Gunder Frank. These scholars had observed patterns of U.S. foreign policy toward the Third World—including the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965 and the Vietnam War—and began to highlight certain contradictions between U.S. interests in the developing world and the interests of the developing nations themselves.

Baran (1957) was an orthodox Marxist. His work, published by Monthly Review Press, was often cited in the literature but seldom was used as the foundation of a model of development or international behavior. Gunder Frank's work was much more influential. In his seminal *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (1967), Frank developed the architecture of modern, Marxian dependency theory. He described a process by which advanced industrial economies expropriate the economic surplus of the periphery and appropriate these resources for the purpose of their own development. In this sense, capitalist processes in the advanced industrial countries *condition*, maybe even *determine*, the development of the Third World. More than that, he argued, the development of the industrialized West had come at the expense of the poorest countries in the world.

Frank contended that the advanced industrial states have imposed an identical capitalist structure on peripheral states, which leaves no room for the development of national economies and an independent bourgeoisie apart from imperialism. Frank examined the case of Chile and starkly concluded that the nation's underdevelopment had come at the hands of American investors (in addition to Iberian mercantilists and British traders in earlier centuries), who control Chile's export sector. Often, military or political force was exercised on the part of the United States to protect the assets of American investors and reinforce Chilean dependency. In this view, there was a distinct correlation between Latin America's economic dependency and U.S. political hegemony.

Other work in the dependency school—such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto's *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (1979)—was less partisan and ideological. Their analysis also derived from a Marxist perspective, but it was less rigidly ideological than the

Frank school and was more in the European socialist or social-democratic tradition. It served more as a corrective to modernization theories, which had become central in the discipline of comparative politics and international relations in the 1960s. Theories of modernization—put forth by such scholars as W.W. Rostow (1960), Seymour M. Lipset (1959), and Karl Deutsch (1961) had presumed that all societies progress through similar stages of development, ultimately converging on similar forms of pluralistic democracy. Using the experiences of the United States and European countries as a model, these theorists maintained that economic growth and industrialization would give rise to a strong entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, a moderate middle class, organized interest groups, and a stable, accountable, and responsive political system.

“Developmentalism,” as this modernization school of thought became known, was more than just an intellectual exercise; it became a policy directive with significant implications for American foreign policy. The approach helped shape and justify U.S. foreign policy in the Third World during the early 1960s, including the massive amounts of foreign aid that were channeled to distant governments. Rostow, in fact, served as Lyndon B. Johnson’s national security advisor and his theories undoubtedly influenced American foreign policy in Vietnam during his tenure. Of course, these policies were developed during the Cold War, so the underlying motive was to quell the spread of communism and reduce the Soviet threat. Interestingly, Rostow’s (1960) well-known book entitled *The Stages of Economic Growth* was subtitled *A Non-Communist Manifesto*.

Policy makers attuned to development theory assumed that pouring U.S. currency into these nations would stimulate economic growth, create a middle class, build infrastructure, construct thriving civil societies, and, ultimately, induce democracy. In many respects, today’s U.S. foreign policy towards much of the Third World is still based on these early developmentalist theories of modernization.

The most substantial critique of development theory came from the dependency school and other critical theorists. For one, these scholars criticized Rostow, Lipset, Deutsch, and others for neglecting the international context of development. While development theory suggested that countries develop autonomously and in relative isolation, the dependency approach insisted that developing nations were caught up in global market forces over which they had little control. These nations were victims of exploitation by multinational corporations, international financial institutions (the World Bank, International Monetary Fund), and wealthy countries. These dependency theorists placed emphasis on precisely the factors development theory had disregarded: international actors, global capitalism, and class conflict.

As one can ascertain from our review of this literature, there are two general expressions of the dependency approach. One can be characterized as a more scholarly account of the factors that contribute to relations of dependency and thus tends to be less radical. Scholars who adhere to this perspective agree that the United States (and other advanced industrial democracies) exploit developing countries, attempt to control state policy, allow multinational corporations to drain these countries of their natural resources, and often intervene militarily to aid this process or to quell populist uprisings that may undermine their control in these regions.

In its more radical expression, dependency theory took on substantial political and ideological tones. Leftist academics as well as university students suggested that the affluence of the First World came at the expense of the Third World’s stagnation. Moreover, the *dependistas* (as they were termed) believed that poor countries would be condemned to perpetual underdevelopment unless they liberated themselves from the world capitalist system. More generally, many of these radicals were highly critical of U.S. foreign policy in developing regions. As was indicated above, a substantial part of American foreign policy during the early Cold War years originated in and derived from theories of developmentalism. But some *dependistas* charged that the approach was part of a Cold War strategy to keep the Third World under U.S. control. Developmentalism, in their view, was a kind of ideological smokescreen

behind which U.S. imperialism operated. These scholars were later criticized for incriminating the United States as *the* source of underdevelopment and neglecting the nefarious role that the former Soviet Union played in its Eastern Europe bloc and other troubled regions in the world.

World Systems Analysis

In the 1970s American scholar Immanuel Wallerstein developed his world systems approach, a paradigm that was closely related to the dependency school. Wallerstein, however, eschewed the study of specific relations of dependency between the United States and developing nations, instead describing a *world* system of dependency and exploitation. Like other critical theorists, Wallerstein rejected the idea that economies are isolated national entities, putting forth the idea of a grand world economic system. The system, he argued, is composed of core, semi-periphery, and peripheral states. A global division of labor, constituted within this world economic system, unifies these states.

The core states, including the United States, West European countries, and later Japan and South Korea, enjoy a quasi-monopoly over the productive processes as they control leading products and hence gain a greater percentage of world profit. Peripheral states—including states in the regions of Eastern Europe, southern Europe, Africa, southern Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East—are in an inherently weak position as they attempt to gain profit from competitive products. The semi-peripheries, Wallerstein argued, are balanced precariously between the two poles and are pulled in opposite directions. Wallerstein (2004) included in the semi-peripheral category the developing “giants” of China, India, and Brazil.

The state and interstate system are important components of the world economic system, as state sovereignty and legal precepts largely determine systemic economic relations. Wallerstein argued that strong states pressure weaker ones to keep their markets open while resisting demands for reciprocity. Moreover, the trajectory of the world economic and political system is determined by intensifying dominance by the core. Each social sector affects the other in crucial ways, and their independent assessment does little for our historical understanding. As one can see, Wallerstein’s approach went far beyond relations of dependency or U.S. hegemony. His approach involved studies of global colonialism and imperialism, thus constructing an expansive structural and historical theory of international economic relations and exploitation.

These critical theories of dependency and world systems analysis became widely popular in the 1970s in academic as well as policy circles. Although these approaches began to draw criticism and demonstrate some empirical cracks, they continued to be relevant paradigms with which to understand American foreign policy well into the 1980s. The counter-revolutionary policies of the United States in Central America at this time seemed to support the hypotheses of critical theorists. The U.S. support of the military government in El Salvador; the financing, arming, and training of the *Contras* in Nicaragua; and the U.S. invasion of Grenada in October 1983 fit into a pattern of Washington seeking to quell leftist uprisings and socialist expansion in neighboring regions. Such intervention in the internal affairs of weaker countries on the part of the United States seemed to validate these critical theories and their predictions for foreign policy behavior.

Not surprisingly, these critical theories of American foreign policy won much favor in elite and intellectual circles throughout the developing world. *Dependencia* was presented as a theory indigenous to Latin America and became a kind of ideology for the continent. It tended to attribute the region’s underdevelopment to American foreign policy in the region, and placed emphasis on the relationship between the American government, U.S. corporations, and Latin American militaries. As such, critical theorists took the blame for economic stagnation off the shoulders of poor states and directed this blame toward their more powerful neighbors.

Beyond Latin America, dependency theory gained prominence throughout post-independence Africa. In the 1970s there was widespread resistance to neocolonialism and the West and a strong sense of political and economic nationalism. In Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Ethiopia, regimes voiced Marxist and Marxist-Leninist opposition to the world capitalist system. Critical approaches provided a theoretical perspective for elites in the region and ultimately spurred political resistance in the form of the non-aligned movement, the Organization for African Unity, and the Group of 77, all of which voiced their grievances openly in the United Nations.

As these theories disseminated across the globe and began to take root in comparative politics, sociology, and economics literatures, the concepts were theoretically refined and expanded. Dependency scholars had originally accused developmentalists of a kind of theoretical reductionism, in that their theories failed to take into account the international context and especially the context of international dependency in which development occurred. However, in placing emphasis on international market forces and a global division of labor, many of these critical theorists neglected the domestic politics of external dependency. Dependency theory seemed to suffer from its own reductionism, in that it subordinated a detailed analysis of the individual parts of dependency to the whole. Traditional dependency theorists had treated the paradigm as a general theory rather than a process in a particularized context. They had virtually ignored local histories, portraying local actors as little more than pawns of multinational corporations and U.S. policy makers. Scholars began to recognize that the image of the impotent Third World state caught in a dizzying frenzy of external forces that lay beyond their control was, perhaps, an inaccurate portrayal of reality.

New literature sought to provide a much-needed corrective to this problem, by placing emphasis not just on international factors but on domestic actors and domestic conflicts *within* these dependent nations. Cardoso and Faletto's *Dependency and Development* (1979) examined the internal as well as external evolution of underdevelopment in Latin America. These authors argued that the continent's development trajectory has been conditioned by an interplay of external *and* internal forces. Latin America's peripheral status in the world economy, they suggested, is a product of a complicated interaction among foreign influences, domestic institutional structures, political power, social movements, and historical alliances. Cardoso and Faletto were able to recast the dependency approach as a broad theory of development, one that went beyond the notion of external subordination.

Peter Evans's (1979) study of Brazil examined the links among local business elites, international capital, and developing states, and the basis for both their cooperation and their conflict. Evans highlighted how the political and military resources of the U.S. government were used to safeguard and sustain capital in Brazil. But he also drew attention to the political and military power of the Brazilian state in manipulating the flow of capital within the country. As such, his variant of dependency theory went beyond a straightforward depiction of a strong power dominating a weak state to examine the local actors and state apparatuses that contributed to Brazil's dependent development.

This literature also shied away from the earlier assumptions of traditional neo-Marxists that, given the mechanisms of the world economic system, developing nations would be condemned to perpetual stagnation and underdevelopment. These later scholars recognized an important subtlety. Many of these nations were indeed industrializing at a steady pace, but their trajectories were entirely reliant on markets in advanced industrial economies and the activities of multinational corporations. Capitalist development *was* occurring in the "Global South" (a term popularized after the Cold War), albeit in dependent situations. Relatedly, many critical theorists identified what was known as a "dual economy." Scholars such as Tony Smith (1985) observed that developing countries are generally comprised of a traditional enclave and a modern sector. The traditional economy operates on the basis of indigenous

cultures and institutions inherited from the past alongside a modern enclave that is geared towards export-led growth. It is in this segment of the local economy where investment is rooted, capital accumulates, skills are learned, and class interests take shape. But while these modern sectors are integrated into the global market, they are nonetheless inextricably tied to foreign interests. While technology and skills are transmitted to these countries from advanced industrial nations, the processes of innovation are not their own.

Interestingly, as dependency theory became more theoretically nuanced it began shedding its heavy ideological baggage. The Marxist-Leninist undertones that marked a substantial portion of the dependency literature (and the fact that it resonated so well with leftist students and activists) delegitimized these critical theories in the view of many academics in the scholarly community. However, more pragmatic approaches to dependency appeared in the literature, contributing much to this research agenda. One example of such work is Theodore Moran's *Multinational Corporations and the Politics of Dependence* (1975). This study was a serious scholarly attempt at examining how, why, and to what extent North American corporations were intervening in the affairs of Latin American nations. His case study of Chile's copper industry demonstrated that the relationship between multinational corporations and host countries is often one of mutual dependency. Moran's work seemed refreshing to many observers who had grown impatient with the ideological presumptions of much of the dependency school. This practical and neutral approach was a productive step forward for critical theories of American foreign policy.

Still other approaches, while still within a dependency tradition, suggested that even poor, weak, and dependent states are not without their own resources in fending off or manipulating larger outside powers. Think of President Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan or Prime Minister Al Maliki in Iraq, both of whom drove the American government and occupation forces to distraction by their independent initiatives. Another example involves Fidel Castro in Cuba, who defied U.S. government pressures for more than fifty years. Some of our own research has shown that a skillful and clever Latin American president has a variety of resources available to manipulate the U.S. ambassador in her/his country and to frustrate U.S. government initiatives (Wiarda 1969). This is not to say that a small country is equal to the power of the United States; the relations are still asymmetrical. But they are not entirely one-way either, and it is in the dynamics of these complex politics that one often finds the most interesting relations between larger powers and small.

Current Status of the Research

Although dependency theory, world systems analysis, and other neo-Marxist paradigms presented a formidable challenge to conventional development studies and gained prominence throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, their influence seemed to wane in academic and policy circles shortly thereafter. For one, the end of the Cold War had transformed the developing world from pawns in the U.S.-Soviet chessboard to independent players in a rapidly integrating world market. Moreover, the fall of the Soviet Union had effectively sounded the death knell of Marxist ideology. Scholars—such as Francis Fukuyama (1992) in his notable work *The End of History and the Last Man*—had proclaimed that capitalism, free enterprise, and liberal democracy had triumphed with finality. Samuel Huntington's (1991) research on a "third wave" of democratization that had snowballed across the globe in the 1980s seemed to support this claim.

In addition, it became apparent that the policy directives accompanying many dependency approaches were undesirable. It seemed that active participation in the global market—even from a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis the advanced industrial economies—offered a better

route to prosperity and development than isolationist, protectionist or autarkic socialist policies. The swift economic growth of the so-called Asian Tigers—Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and others—lent support to this notion. In large part, these nations soared to prosperity in a relatively brief period because they adopted an “outward” development strategy, predicated on extensive trade with highly industrialized countries. This export-led approach contrasted sharply from the import-substitution strategies that were adopted by many developing countries that hoped to insulate their economies from the capitalist “world system.”

Think also of the number of nations, led by China, that were eager to join the newly created World Trade Organization (WTO). The waiting list is lengthy but almost everyone wants in, including those nations that still uphold the dependency paradigm. Their reasoning—that it is far better to be inside the WTO tent than outside of it—is compelling. Of course, a country may still opt out of the global system, but those who have done so—North Korea, Myanmar, and Cambodia—have not been successful and certainly could not be seen as “models” for other countries.

Finally, many pointed to an empirical reality that weakened the claims of neo-Marxist theorists. In many cases developing countries have proven quite adept at negotiating with multinational corporations and other institutions. Moreover, although weaker in political power, developing countries enjoy a substantial degree of leverage over advanced industrial states in international bargaining. Small countries often have time and can concentrate their resources on a large neighbor, whereas large countries have many obligations and responsibilities and often are reluctant to use their political or military resources against small, defenseless states. Overall, as globalization marched forward, scholars seemed to move away from an emphasis on relations of dependency to a greater emphasis on relations of *interdependence* (see Keohane and Nye 1977). Many began to recognize that newly industrializing countries were not without political or material resources that could be used to their advantage.

Regardless of these challenges, critical theories remain relevant in today’s international landscape. In fact, they may be usefully applied to issues of globalization. Both empirical and normative theorists of globalization have wrestled with the question of whether an increasingly globalized economy is advantageous for developing countries. In his well-known bestseller *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman (2005) declared that the “world is flat.” By this statement, Friedman was implying that the global economy could now be characterized as a level playing field, in which all country competitors—India, China, Brazil, Mexico, others—had equal opportunity to prosper in a globalized economy. But is the world as flat as Friedman assumes?

From a dependency or world systems perspective, the global system remains bifurcated between the core economies and the subjugated periphery. Undoubtedly, the periphery is developing economically and local economies are becoming more integrated into the global economy. Many individuals in developing countries have benefited from the income provided by Western firms’ outsourcing policies. For the most part, the Global South has enthusiastically embraced globalization. However, it is safe to say these countries are in a structurally disadvantaged position and are far from being fully integrated into the world economy. The newly liberalizing economies are attempting to survive in an already well-established global economic system. Attempts to attract investment and trade have been difficult in an increasingly aggressive and competitive international economic climate. Financial flows to the private sector and transnational corporations have largely bypassed low-income countries (many of which are heavily dependent on aid).

Moreover, relations of dependency persist and hierarchies of production still characterize the global economy. Economic interdependence is largely asymmetric, generating and sustaining unequal power relationships among developed and developing countries. Not surprisingly,

the leading industries in most developing countries are comprised of American, Japanese, or West European corporations. Moreover, the phenomenon of a global “race to the bottom”—in which companies move across borders seeking cheap labor and favorable tax regulations in developing countries—demonstrates the continued exploitation of the Third World on the part of advanced industrial economies. While some scholars adhere to a view that “rising tides lift all boats,” others point to evidence that globalization—and the neo-liberal agenda that has accompanied it—has worsened the plight of developing countries and especially of marginal peoples (women, workers, small farmers) within them. For example, many have pointed to the detrimental effects of globalization on public health across the Global South. The neo-liberal policy prescriptions generated by the World Bank and IMF involve such measures as reducing public expenditures on health and reducing the size of the health system by restricting available services or privatizing selected services. The effects of these policies, often known as the “Washington consensus,” have been devastating for the poor.

In addition to these general issues of globalization, critical theories may be particularly relevant in the context of international trade policy. In many respects, international institutions such as the WTO reflect the interests of its advanced industrial member states. Although newly industrializing countries are collaborative partners in these organizations, the developed countries tend to dominate the process and agenda of the WTO as well as the rules and regulations that emanate from it. The Uruguay round of global trade negotiations was the subject of harsh criticism from those who opposed the role that leading industries in rich countries played in drafting the treaty language. Moreover, the talks were criticized for failing to account for the steep price developing countries must pay in implementing the proposed treaty’s requirements. In order to reduce trade barriers and reform trade regulations and procedures, developing countries must designate a substantial portion of their yearly development budget for these matters. Many scholars, non-governmental organizations, and advocacy groups have argued that such multilateral agreements, and the move towards freer trade in general, benefit rich countries at the expense of poorer ones. Negotiations in the current Doha round have stalled for similar reasons, as the leading developing countries (e.g., India, China, Brazil, and South Africa) have protested continuing U.S. and E.U. trade barriers in the form of agricultural subsidies. Nevertheless, on balance, most countries still want to be “in” the WTO rather than on the outside merely observing.

One may also apply the dependency approach to issues of foreign aid and international lending. In the case of many developing countries, a near majority of their income stems from the development assistance of advanced industrial nations. Aid is often distributed according to donor, not local, interests or predicated upon clear geo-political objectives in specific regions of the Global South. Moreover, others have been critical of IMF member countries for pushing austere, neo-liberal reforms as a condition for loan agreements. As indicated above, such “conditionalities” have often worsened social stability and perpetuated poverty in developing countries. In these instances, the theoretical concept of dependency may still offer considerable explanatory power. For some scholars, neo-Marxist theories are as applicable to international politics today as they were during the Cold War, when they held greater prominence in the discipline—only the main actors in the dependency relations have changed.

Some Policy Implications

First of all, humbling though that is, we should recognize that policy makers tend not to pay attention to the great theoretical debates in which scholars engage. If you are a member of Congress, you need to know how to vote *tomorrow* on a bill you may not have read and have no time to seriously consider. If you are a staffer at the State Department or National Security

Council and you are writing a memo to your superior on what to say in his/her upcoming staff or principals' meeting, you must similarly eschew grand theoretical pronouncements. In either case, your manager has no interest in "grand theory" and sees it as irrelevant to his/her work. Our experience in Washington is that only at the think tank level is any attention given over to theoretical concerns (Wiarda 2008).

A second consideration involves the fact that most "grand theories" only provide rationalization for what policy-makers intend to do anyway. Most legislators or Navy admirals for that matter already know how they must vote or act. Bureaucratic, organizational, and political interests are the main factors involved. Most often, you are not a free agent. Instead you must vote or act in accord with your party, agency, or chain-of-command. Third, most policy is based upon decisions made a long time ago, and you as a government official lack the power or authority to change them. Bureaucratic lethargy is one factor; even more important is the fact that, because consensus on a policy is so difficult to achieve, once it has been settled no one wants to reopen the issue.

A good illustration of that is the policy of developmentalism, an appropriate example in this context because developmentalism is usually seen as the counter to dependency theory. The basic policy on the development of nations and a foreign aid policy to foster it was established over fifty years ago by W.W. Rostow and the so-called "Charles River School" (see Blackmer 2002). Rostow, as the architect of the Alliance for Progress and later as national security advisor to President Lyndon Johnson, was in a position to put his ideas into practice. American foreign aid has since gone through various iterations over the decades—infrastructure building, family planning, basic human needs, privatization and state downsizing, sustainable development, civil society, the Washington Consensus—but the basic premises have remained the same: economic development first, and political development, supposedly synonymous with democratization, later. That secondary position has not always sat well with political scientists, or the leaders and citizens of impoverished nations.

What is interesting about developmentalism is not so much its results (mixed) but its staying power as the basis of U.S. foreign aid and development assistance. For more than half a century, from Latin America to Africa, Asia, and Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan, this has been the underlying policy. Presumably it will defeat international terrorism and Islamic radicalism just as it earlier "defeated" communism and authoritarianism. We don't know if developmentalism's remarkable staying power has to do with bureaucratic inertia, a total lack of imagination in the U.S. government, unwillingness to tamper with an agreed-upon consensus that, once questioned, could never be restored again, a total lack of knowledge in the U.S. government regarding what we have learned about the Third World in the last fifty years, or perhaps even the lingering belief that Rostow got it right. What we do know is that this fundamentally flawed approach continues as the basis of U.S. foreign policy long after its initial formulation regardless of either changed conditions in the developing world or the vast advances in our knowledge of how societies change and develop.

Paradigms do, of course, shift over time; there *is* a learning process, in academia if not in government. In addition to continuing developmentalism, dependency analysis and the world systems approach, we have seen the coming and going, or perhaps staying, of such approaches as rational choice, post-modernism, constructivism, the "new" institutionalism, and others not quite so memorable. While each of these academic paradigms seems to stand alone as a body or "island" of theory, in government a different process seems to operate, one in which new approaches (and usually a new bureaucracy to go with it) are simply added on or agglomerated onto the old approach, but without the old one (or its bureaucratic perks, budget, personnel, and influence) being repudiated or dismissed. This process helps explain why the United States and its foreign policies are so gridlocked, paralyzed, and dysfunctional at present (Wiarda 2009).

Conclusion

Our survey indicates that foreign policy studies and international relations more generally may be becoming more like their sister field of comparative politics: more fragmented, few unifying principles, no single “grand theory.” Instead what seems to be happening is the development of several “islands” of theory, competing paradigms unconnected to one another and increasingly going their separate ways. The several islands of theory include realism, neo-classical realism, neo-liberal institutionalism, domestic politics approaches, constructivism, rational choice, developmentalism, dependencia, Marxism, liberal internationalism, and cognitive theories of international relations. Some of these are indigenous to the international relations/foreign policy field; others impose themselves into the field, not always happily, from comparative politics and other outside influence.

If the field is indeed dividing and fragmenting, what should those of us who work on these issues do about it? Among possible responses, scholars are likely to refine their distinctive islands of theory further. They may also benefit by searching for bridges that connect the islands and welcoming a wide array of research traditions, from the qualitative analysis of area studies to the quantitative application of regression analysis. It is unlikely, however, that one theory—whether mainstream or critical—will gain hegemony in the scholarly literature, and even less likely that a grand theory will emerge that gains hegemonic influence.

In terms, less grandiose, of the main subject themes of this chapter, we need to recall that dependency theory initially arose in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to the perceived errors, biases, and oversights of developmentalism and modernization theory. But then, as authoritarianism in several developing areas gave way to democratic rule and the Soviet Union disintegrated, the dependency paradigm was eclipsed first by the rise of the East Asian “tigers” and then by the triumph in both Republican and Democratic administrations of the Washington Consensus. But the so-called “consensus” did not work very well either; all three legs of this unstable stool—democracy, free trade, open markets—are wobbly and showing cracks. On top of that came the severe global economic downturn that began in 2007 that has not only further undermined the Washington Consensus but has given a new shot in the arm to Marxian analysis, dependency theory, and the world systems approach. Perhaps now we need to reassess these critical theories and take more seriously their claim to being the dominant approach in the field.

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