Whatever may have been the case a decade ago, it is no longer necessary to worry about “bringing the state back in” to the analysis of development; the state has fully arrived as an independent object of study and will not soon lose that status. The advocates of state-centric approaches performed a useful service in countering the neglect and structural determinism of earlier theories. We now understand that the state is neither the handmaiden of a particular social class nor the passive registry of contending interest-group pressures; it is an institutional actor separate from, and autonomous of, forces based in civil society, irrespective of whether those forces are conceptualized as classes, interest groups, or elites. Yet the state-centric analysis of development begs as many questions as it answers.

The state’s coercive powers are manifestly inadequate to the achievement of ends much beyond the mere preservation of order. Since the most significant ends—for example, industrialization, social reconstruction—demand a high degree of more or less willing cooperation on the part of the populace at large; what other tools can the state bring to bear, and how do they function? Despite yesterday’s high hopes and a considerable expenditure of effort, no Third World state has yet managed to institute a more just and equitable social order than that associated with Western capitalism. Whence the societal resistance to change ordered from above? (The recent experiences of the USSR and Eastern Europe suggest that advances in technology, industrial cultures, and social structures, and highly developed coercive and ideological apparatuses are much less central to the effectiveness of state-imposed social change than has generally been assumed heretofore.) Even in Africa, where processes of class formation are fairly new, states do not operate in a social vacuum. What is the relationship between the state and the contending forces of civil society, and how are the political outcomes of this relationship determined? Our discipline is now attempting to deal more directly with the culturally and historically determined structures of meaning that underlie all political action. How and to what degree can the state influence the evolution of the so-called moral order? How and to what degree is state action shaped and constrained by that order?

Joel S. Migdal’s *Strong Societies and Weak States* apparently sets out to answer such questions. In his theoretical chapter, Migdal centers on the issue of social control, conceptualized as “the successful subordination of people’s own inclinations of social behavior . . . in favor of the behavior prescribed by . . . rules” established by particular social forces or by the state (22). Many non-state forces and institutions “have used a variety of sanctions, rewards, and symbols to induce people to behave in their interactions according to certain rules or norms” (22); the state’s effort to institute its own social control places it in competition with these forces, and the outcome of the competition is very much an open question. Each contender puts forth a combination of incentives and punishments, “ordered and packaged . . . to be as attractive and compelling to
people as possible." Importantly, Migdal adds that although the "packaging rests... on the bedrock of material needs... it also lends meaning to people's behavior as they meet these needs." Thus, social control involves as well the shaping of a "consciousness about social behavior" that "aims to tie action together in some meaningful or purposeful way... These systems of meaning... make manageable a universe... They address cravings and needs, such as salvation, affection, and respect," and may be regarded as indispensable social myths" (26).

Meanwhile, the people who are to be controlled act on the basis of "strategies of survival" which integrate "the material and the moral." These strategies have an economic basis, to be sure, but they also embody people's use of "myths or symbols to help explain their place and prospects in an otherwise bewildering world." Since the "choice of components for one's strategy of survival is severely constrained by available resources, ideas, and organization means," social control "rests on the organizational ability to deliver key components," including the symbolic-mythical component. The symbolic configurations and "arrays of rewards and sanctions have determined the characteristic forms of social control in a society; through time, they have constituted the specific institutional arrangements that have... marked off one culture from another" (27). In thus refining the concept of social control, Migdal has usefully combined ideas about ideology and belief with notions of material interest and power. This is a worthwhile advance over deterministic theories, like orthodox Marxism, and theories that reduce all action to rational choice.

Given the nature of the theoretical framework, one anticipates a rich analysis of carefully selected cases in which the principal dimensions of social control, the symbolic-cultural in addition to the material-economic, are subjected to integrated empirical study in order to verify the theory. Unfortunately, the promise of the first chapter is never redeemed. The three cases examined—Sierra Leone, Israel, and Egypt—have very little in common; the suspicion arises that they were selected because Migdal already knew something about them rather than because together they offered a systematic test of theoretically derived propositions and claims. Much of the discussion belabor issues that most analysts of Third World development have for some time regarded as settled: is it necessary, in 1990, to devote over 150 pages to demonstrating that the societal forces which most successfully resist the state's effort to establish social control are products of colonialism rather than "tradition"? Nor will many readers be surprised to find that Third World states are weak because their societies suffer from "fragmented social control" (non-state elites have usually managed to preserve their social control and even reinforce it by colonizing state institutions). The emergence of a strong state, Migdal believes, requires "massive societal dislocation, which severely weakens social control" and which can be provided only by "a devastating combination of war and/or revolution, sometimes associated with massive migration" (269–70). There is no hint that other wrenching social changes—the introduction of industrialism and capitalist market and work relationships, urban migration, processes of class formation, etc.—could have comparable effects.

The popular resistance to domination that has become an important area of research is equally absent from Migdal's treatment. The explication of the case studies follows well-worn elite-analytical pathways from which the people